VISIT…

How to play JAZZ BASSLINES

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MOONPIPE MUSIC PUBLISHING CO

THE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW:

1. The first thing is that you must know, on the instrument, how to play all of the chords and scales listed on the next few pages. These are the raw materials from which bass lines are built. Practice them over the full range of the fingerboard.

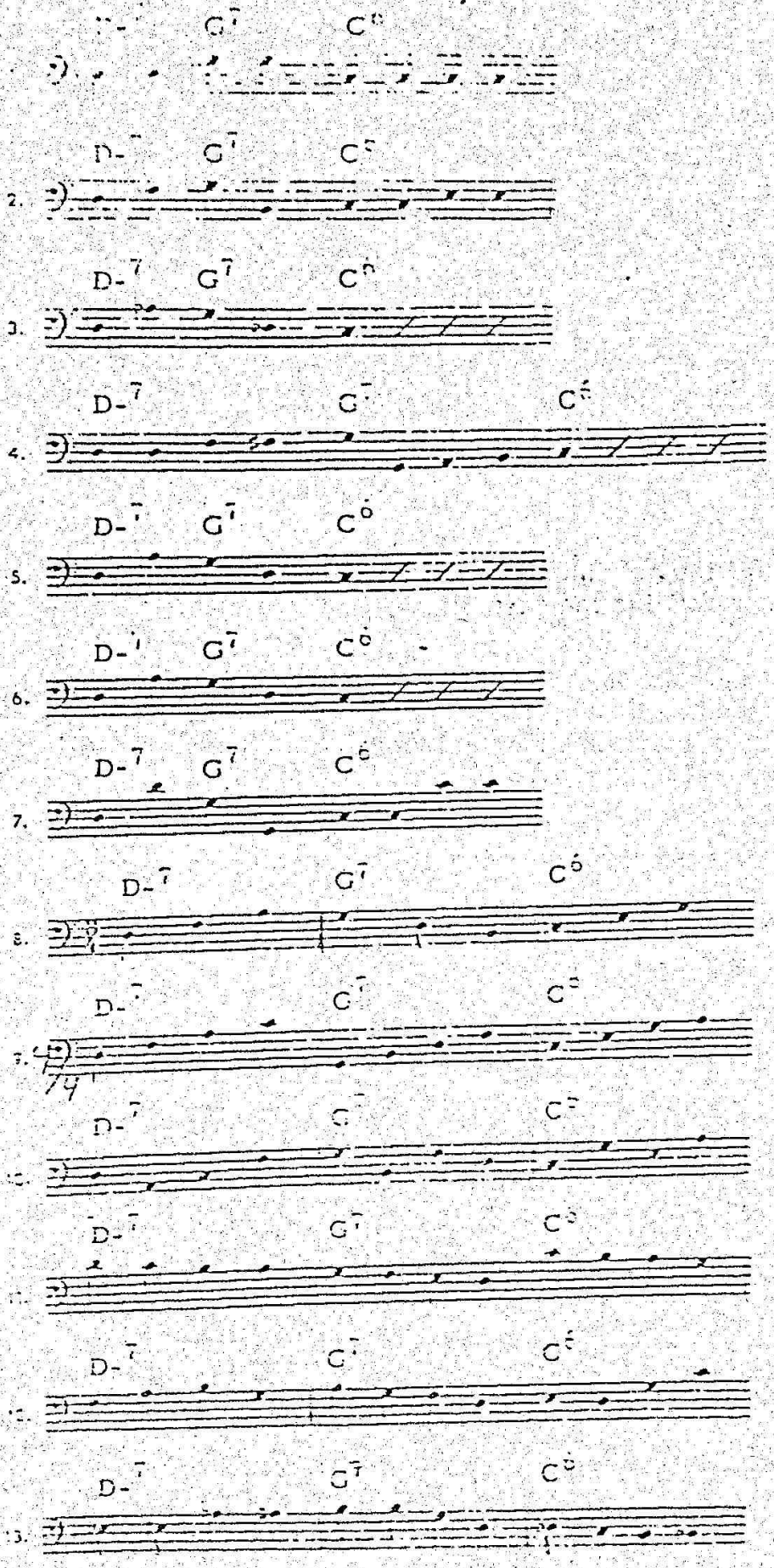
2. Bass is the name of the instrument for a reason: it functions as the "base" — the foundation of the jazz ensemble. Rhythmically it sets up the time. Harmonically it plays the basis of the harmony, that means the bass notes and that means the roots of the chords.

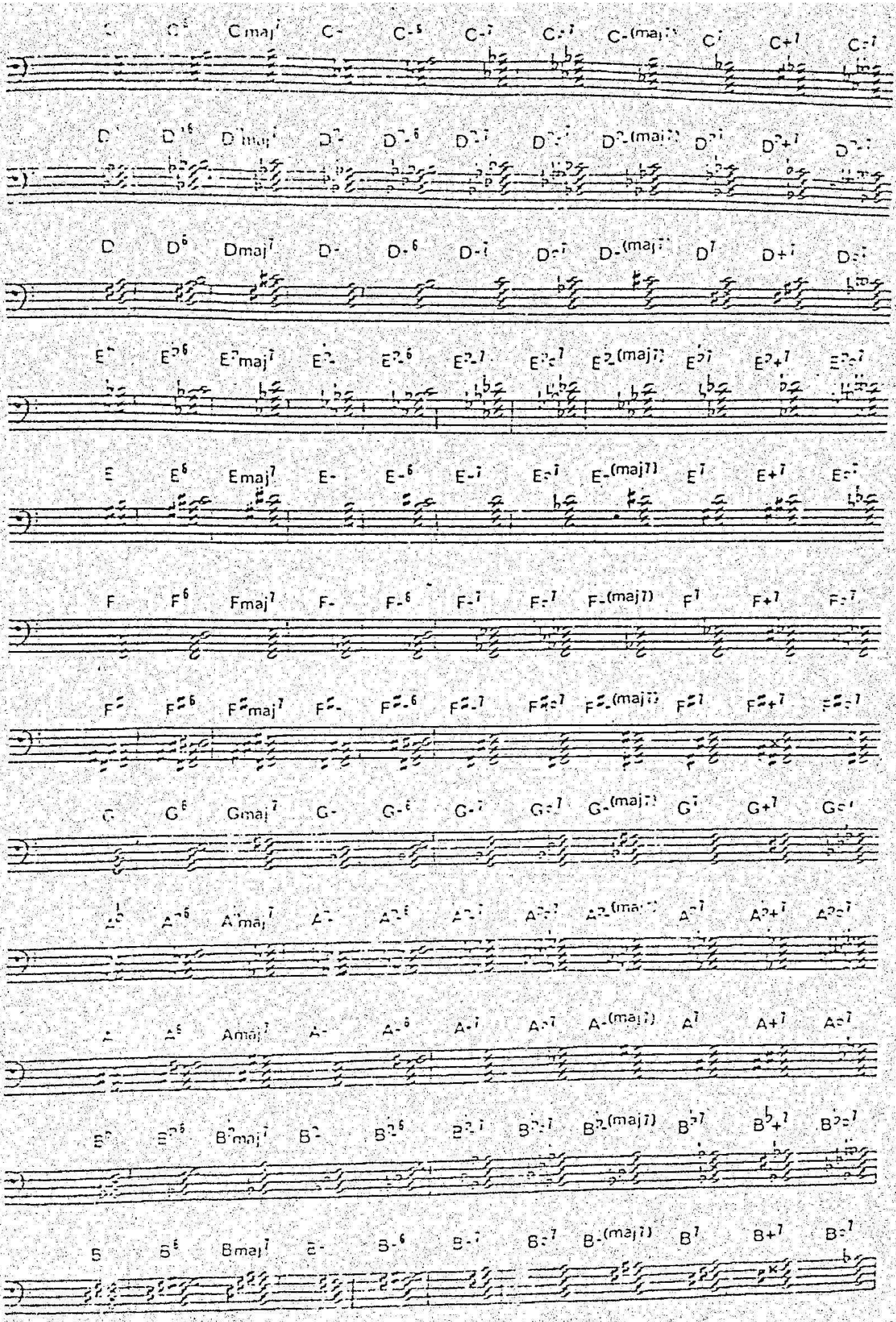
3. The root of any chord is the note that produces the letter name of the chord, e.g., the root of the d minor chord is the note D.

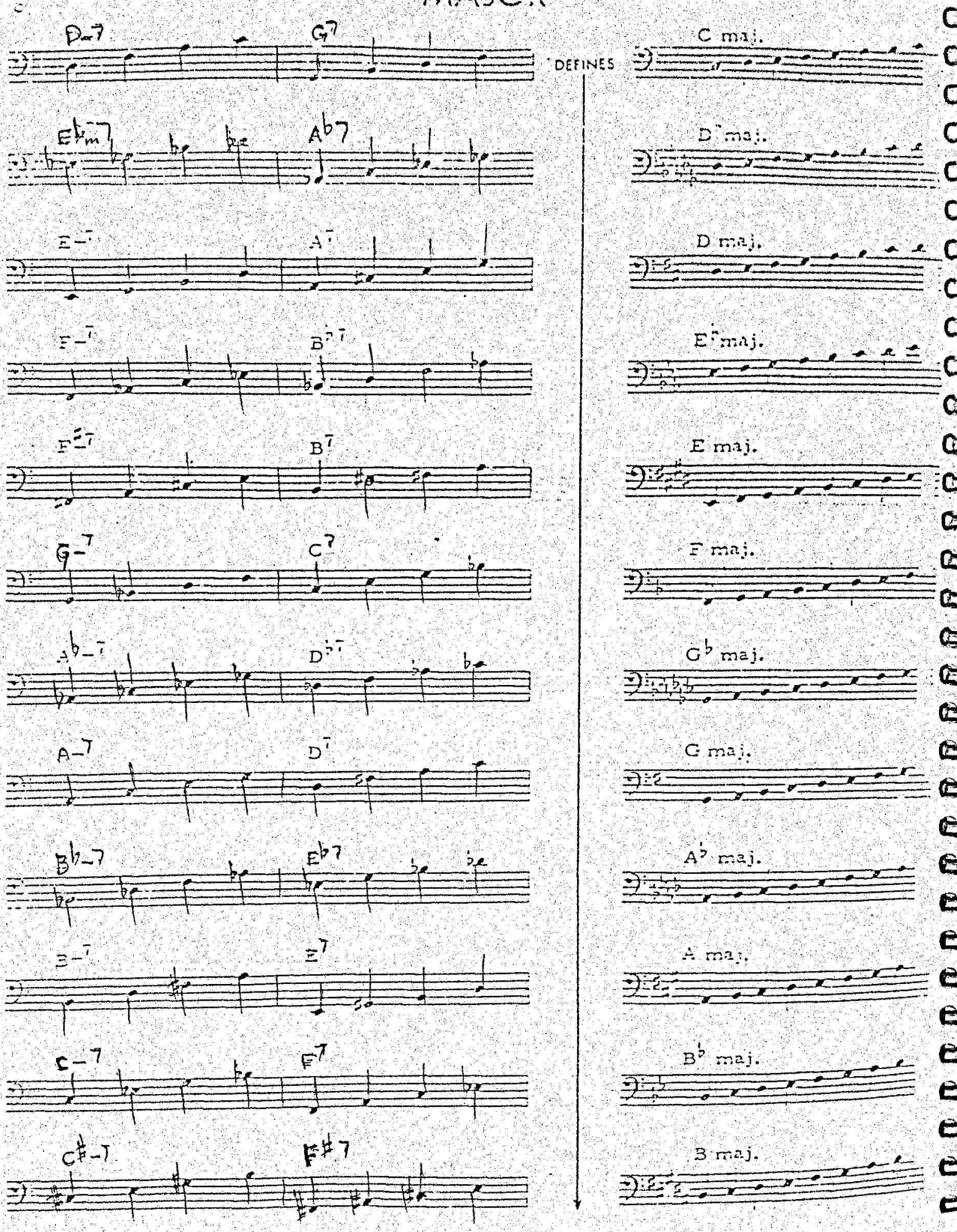
4. So, bass lines, in all forms of jazz, usually are the roots of the chords of the composition, and notes that connect these roots. The roots usually are played on the strong beats of the measure, that is the first and third beats, and whenever the chord changes.

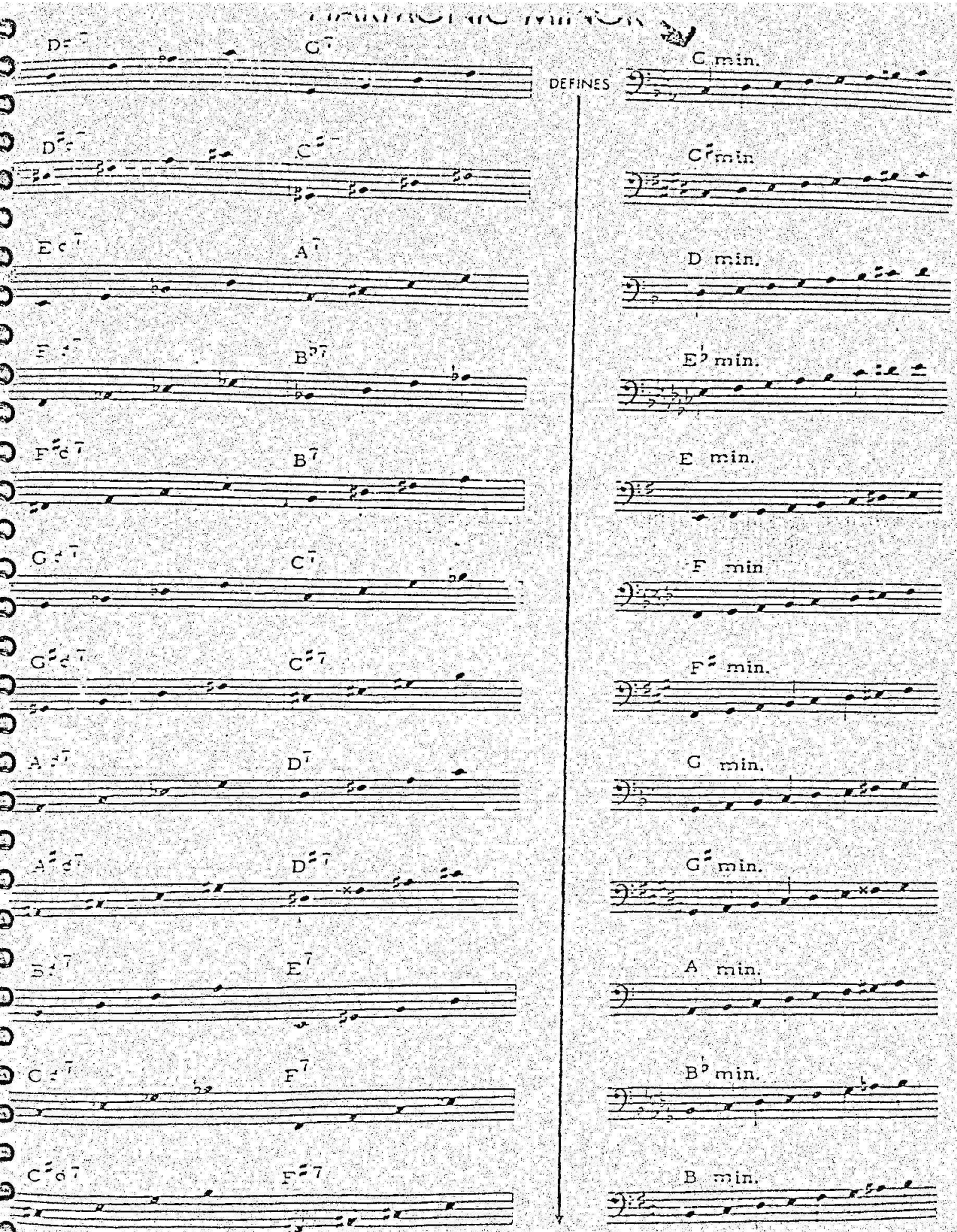
5. The following thirteen examples, all based on the chord progression D-7 G7 C6 show how most lines are played.

A Summary of Parts 1 through 13




C C6 Cmaj7 C- C-6 C-7 C-7 C-(maj7) C7 C+7 C-7
D D6 Dmaj7 D- D-6 D-7 D-7 D-(maj7) D7 D+7 D-7
D D6 Dmaj7 D- D-6 D-7 D-7 D-(maj7) D7 D+7 D-7
E E6 Emaj7 E- E-6 E-7 E-7 E-(maj7) E7 E+7 E-7
E E6 Emaj7 E- E-6 E-7 E-7 E-(maj7) E7 E+7 E-7
F F6 Fmaj7 F- F-6 F-7 F-7 F-(maj7) F7 F+7 F-7
F F6 Fmaj7 F- F-6 F-7 F-7 F-(maj7) F7 F+7 F-7
G G6 Gmaj7 G- G-6 G-7 G-7 G-(maj7) G7 G+7 G-7
A A6 Amaj7 A- A-6 A-7 A-7 A-(maj7) A7 A+7 A-7
A A6 Amaj7 A- A-6 A-7 A-7 A-(maj7) A7 A+7 A-7
B B6 Bmaj7 B- B-6 B-7 B-7 B-(maj7) B7 B+7 B-7
B B6 Bmaj7 B- B-6 B-7 B-7 B-(maj7) B7 B+7 B-7

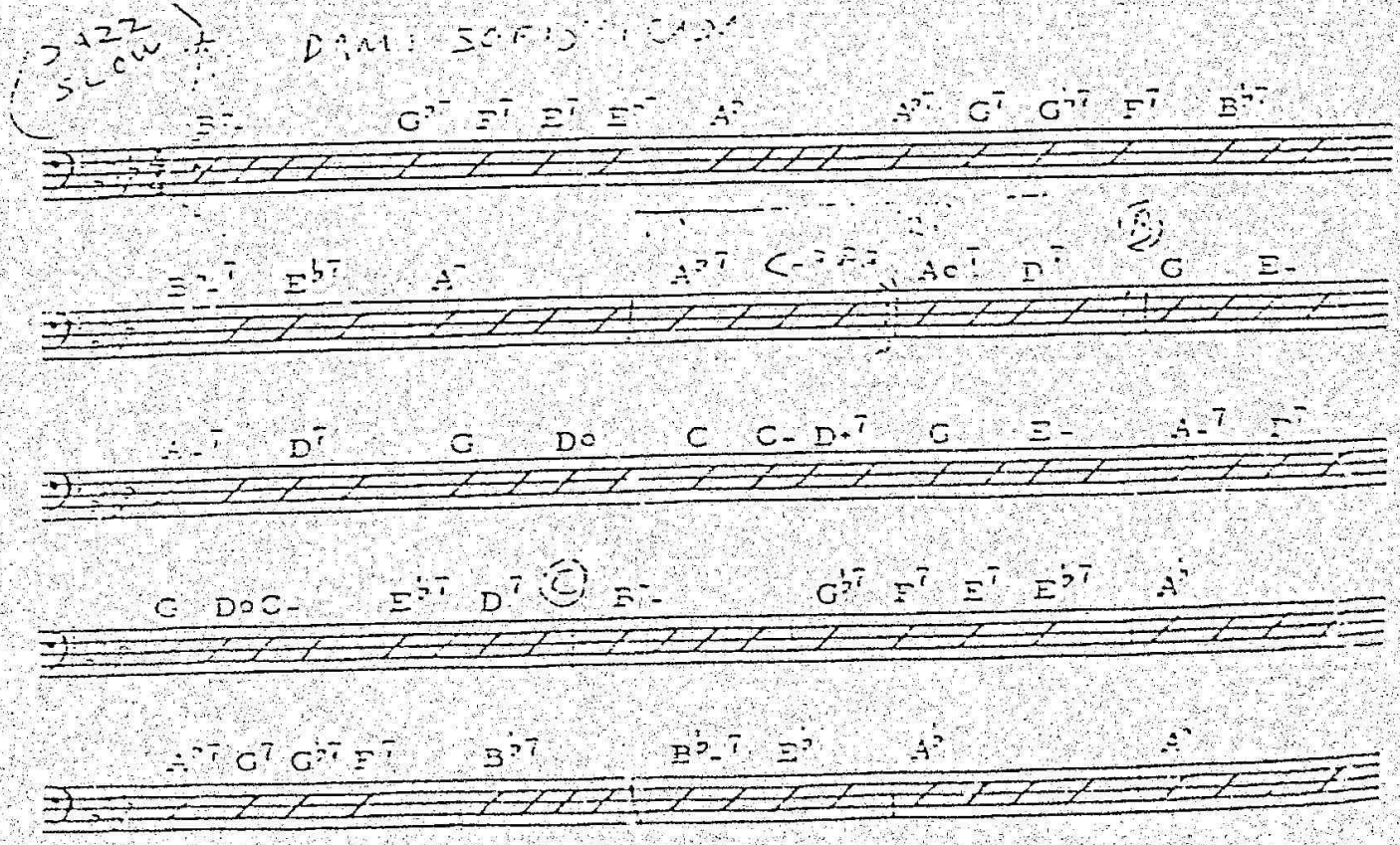

D-7
G7
DEFINES
C maj.
E♭m7
A♭7
D♭maj.
E-7
A7
D maj.
F-7
B♭7
E♭maj.
F#-7
B7
E maj.
G-7
C7
F maj.
A♭-7
D♭7
G♭ maj.
A-7
D7
G maj.
B♭-7
E♭7
A♭ maj.
B-7
E7
A maj.
C-7
F7
B♭ maj.
C#-7
F#7
B maj.


DEFINES
C min.
C♯ min.
D min.
E♭ min.
E min.
F min
F♯ min.
G min.
G♯ min.
A min.
B♭ min.
B min.

PART ONE: PLAY THE ROOT OF THE CHORD

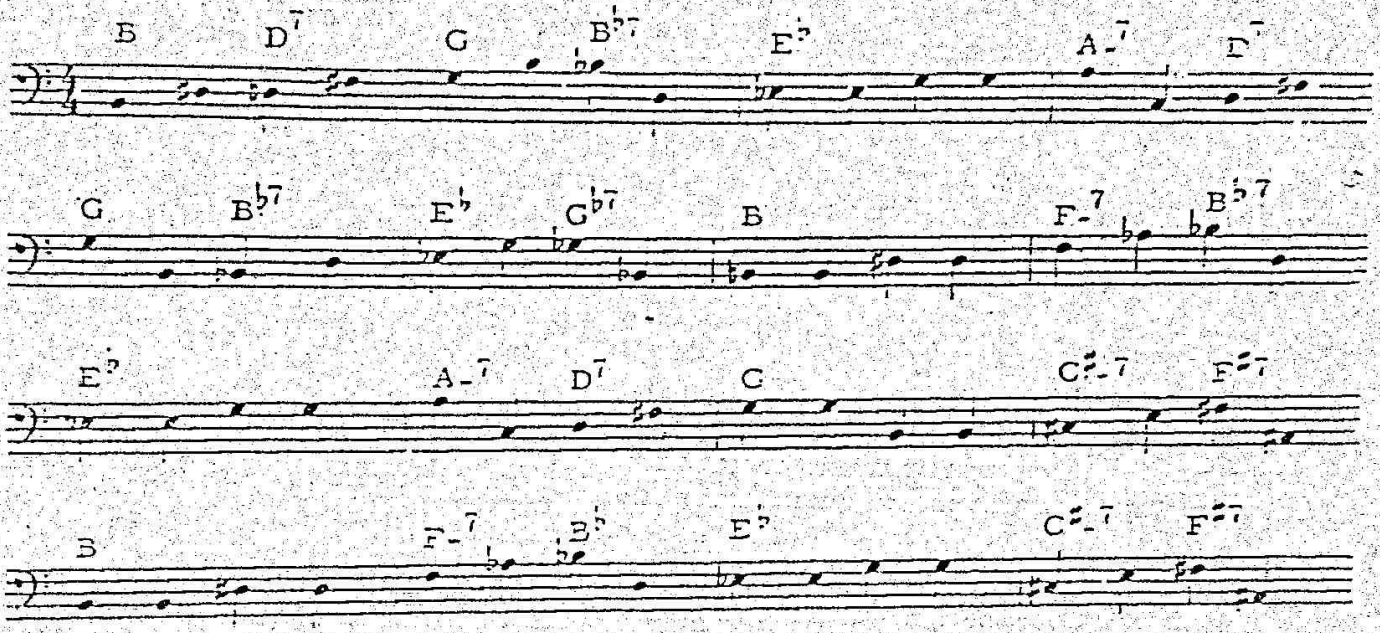
Play the following composition by playing the roots of the chords. To vary the sound, experiment with changing octaves: e.g., play one root note down low, and then the same root note up an octave:

Even though this is a simple exercise, make music: get a full sound and nice tone on your instrument with an alive rhythmic beat and good intonation. Have your lines create interesting shapes.



PART TWO: PLAY THE ROOT ON THE STRONG BEAT, THEN THE THIRD

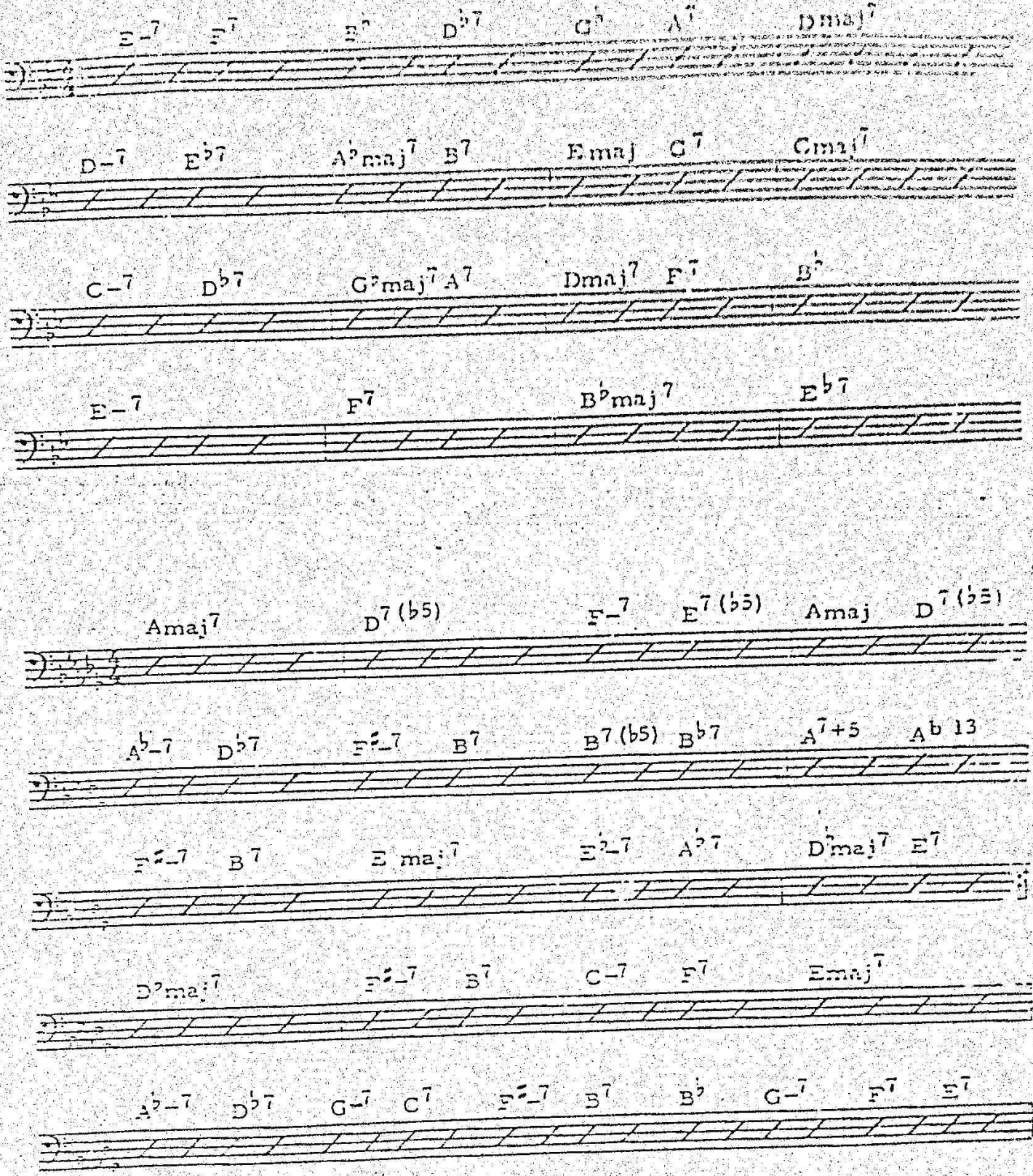
Playing the root, then the third is the best way to approach chord patterns where the chords last for two beats. This approach makes many of the most difficult jazz tunes easy to play. Check it out.



So while the other musicians may be scuffling with the changes, you can calmly lay down those roots and thirds and have the whole thing under control . . . at least until you solo.

Following are two tunes with changes even harder than this jazz standard. Give them a try, remembering roots on the strong beats (one and three) and thirds to connect these roots. Also remember that you may change octaves at will.

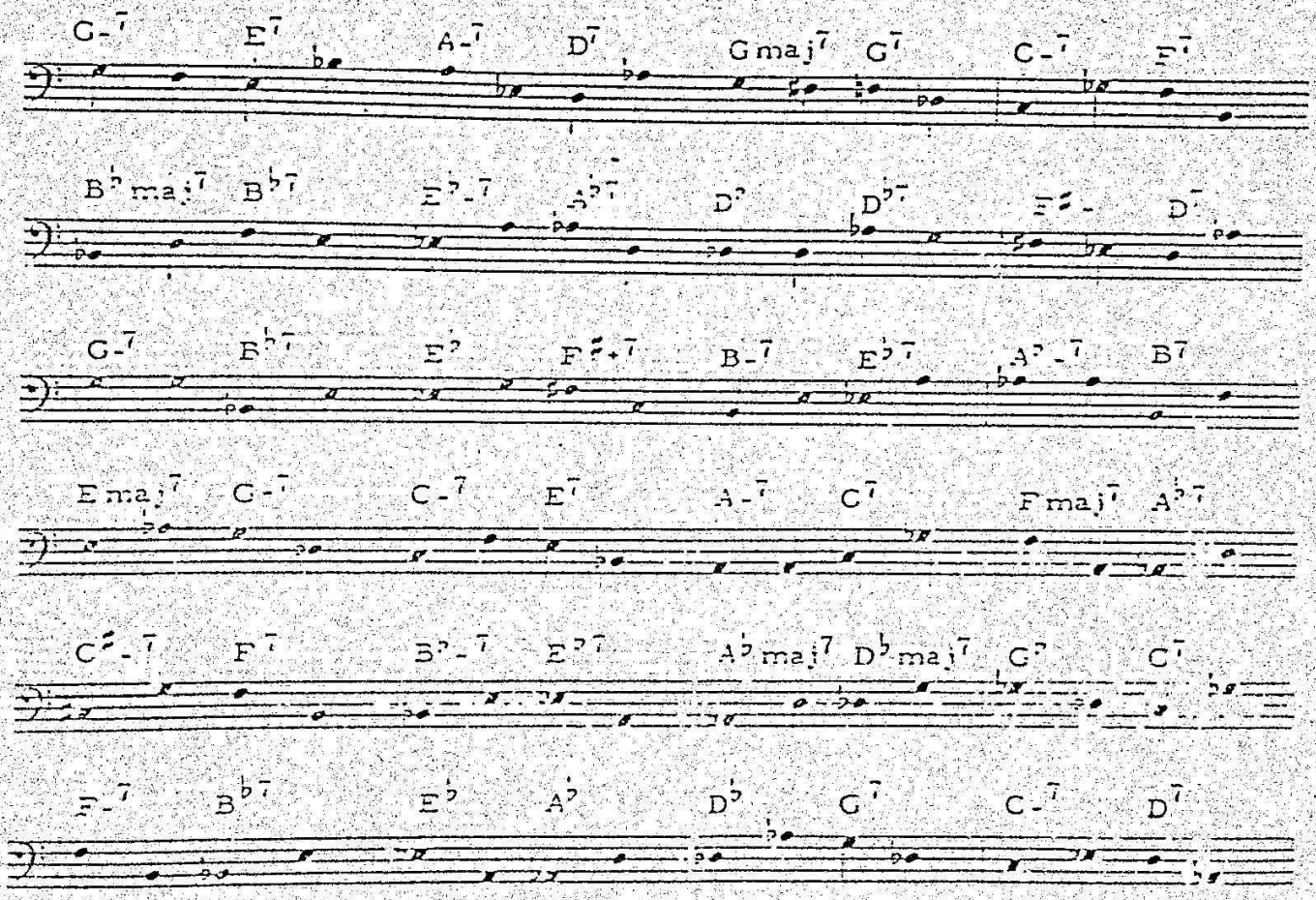
10.


E-7 F7 E♭ D♭7 G♭ A7 Dmaj7
D-7 E♭7 A♭maj7 B7 Emaj G7 Cmaj7
C-7 D♭7 G♭maj7 A7 Dmaj7 F7 B♭
E-7 F7 B♭maj7 E♭7
Amaj7 D7(♭5) F-7 E7(♭5) Amaj D7(♭5)
A♭-7 D♭7 F♯-7 B7 B7(♭5) B♭7 A7+5 A♭13
F♯-7 B7 E maj7 E♭-7 A♭7 D♭maj7 E7
D♭maj7 F♯-7 B7 C-7 F7 Emaj7
A♭-7 D♭7 G-7 C7 F♯-7 B7 B♭ G-7 F7 E7

PART THREE: PLAY THE ROOT, THEN APPROACH THE NEXT ROOT FROM ½ STEP ABOVE

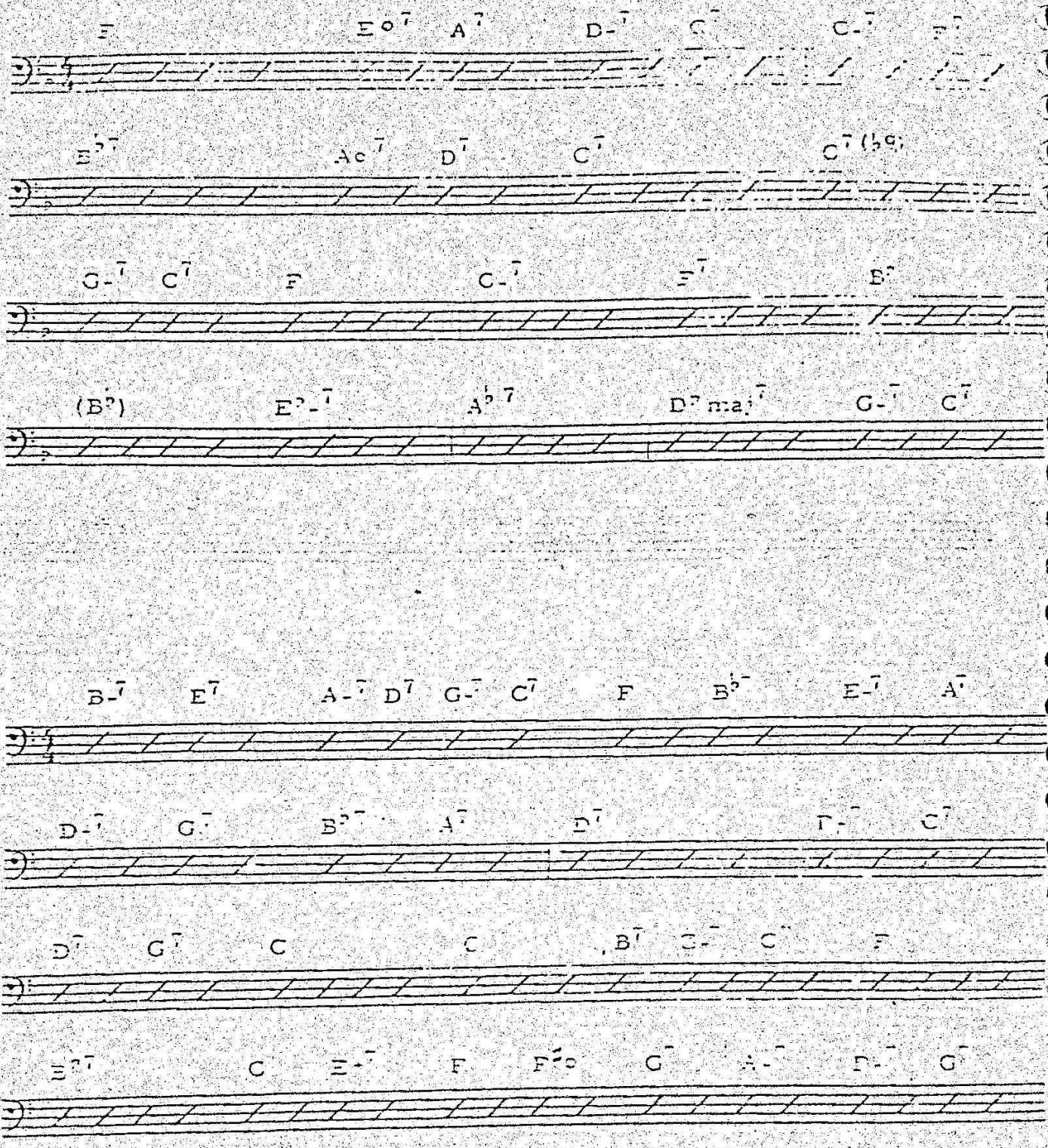
This pattern is quite common. It helps to create smooth and moving lines. It works well with ii-7, V7 changes (e.g.: D-7 G7, Eb-7 Ab7, C-7 F7, etc). The note a half step above need not be in the chord, but it helps if it is. The only exception to this rule is don't play a note which is a major third on a minor chord (e.g., don't play a B on a g minor chord, or an E on a c minor chord, etc.).

The following tune has an entire line written out using this pattern. Play it through to get an idea of the use of ½ step above approaches.



On the following page are the changes to two tunes. Play as many possibilities as you can make up using this pattern. Remember that you would never play an entire tune using this approach; but it sure sounds good for up to four measures of chord changes.

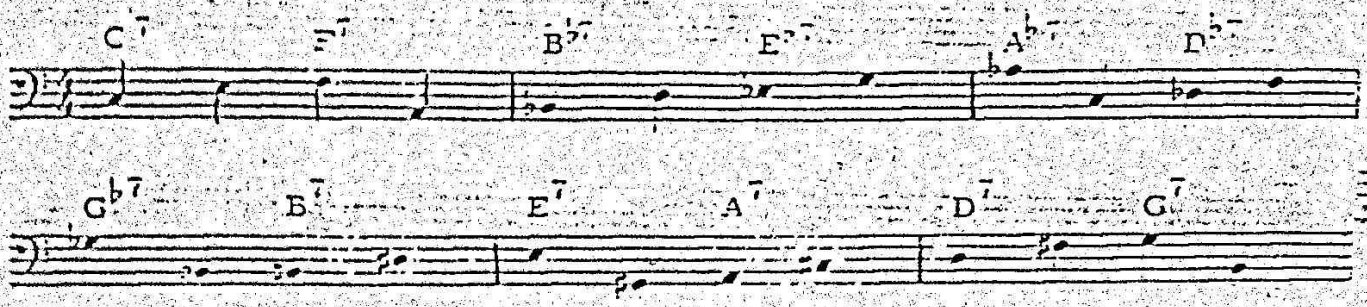
12.


F E°7 A7 D-7 G7 C-7 F7
E♭7 Ac7 D7 C7 C7 (b9)
G-7 C7 F C-7 E7 B♭
(B♭) E♭-7 A♭7 D7 maj7 G-7 C7
B-7 E7 A-7 D7 G-7 C7 F B♭7 E-7 A7
D-7 G7 B♭7 A7 D7 D-7 C7
D7 G7 C C B7 B-7 C7 F
E♭7 C E-7 F F#° G7 A-7 D-7 G7

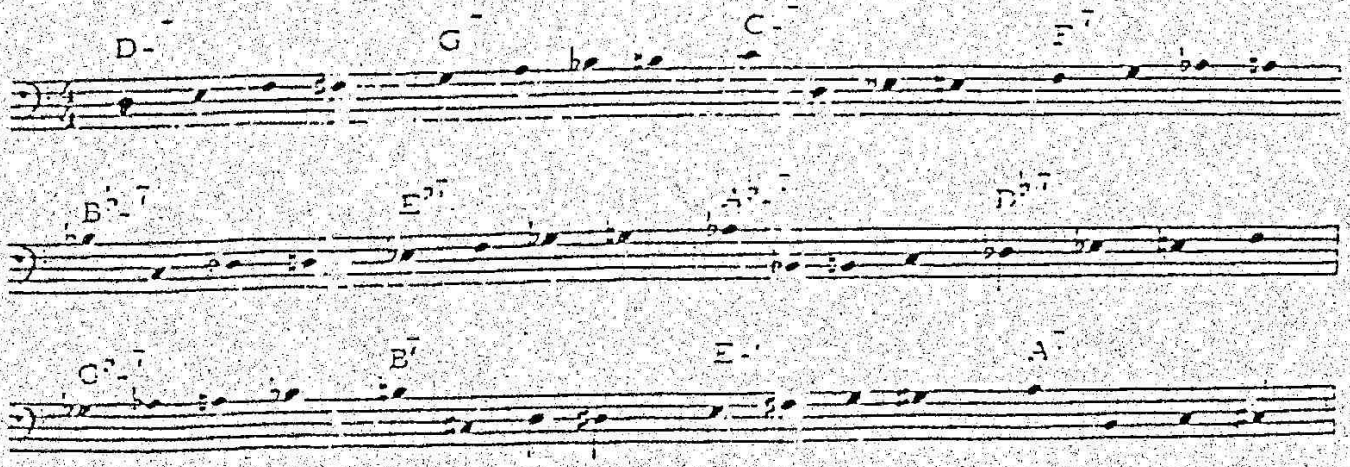
PART FOUR: PLAY THE ROOT, THEN APPROACH THE NEXT ROOT FROM ½ STEP BELOW

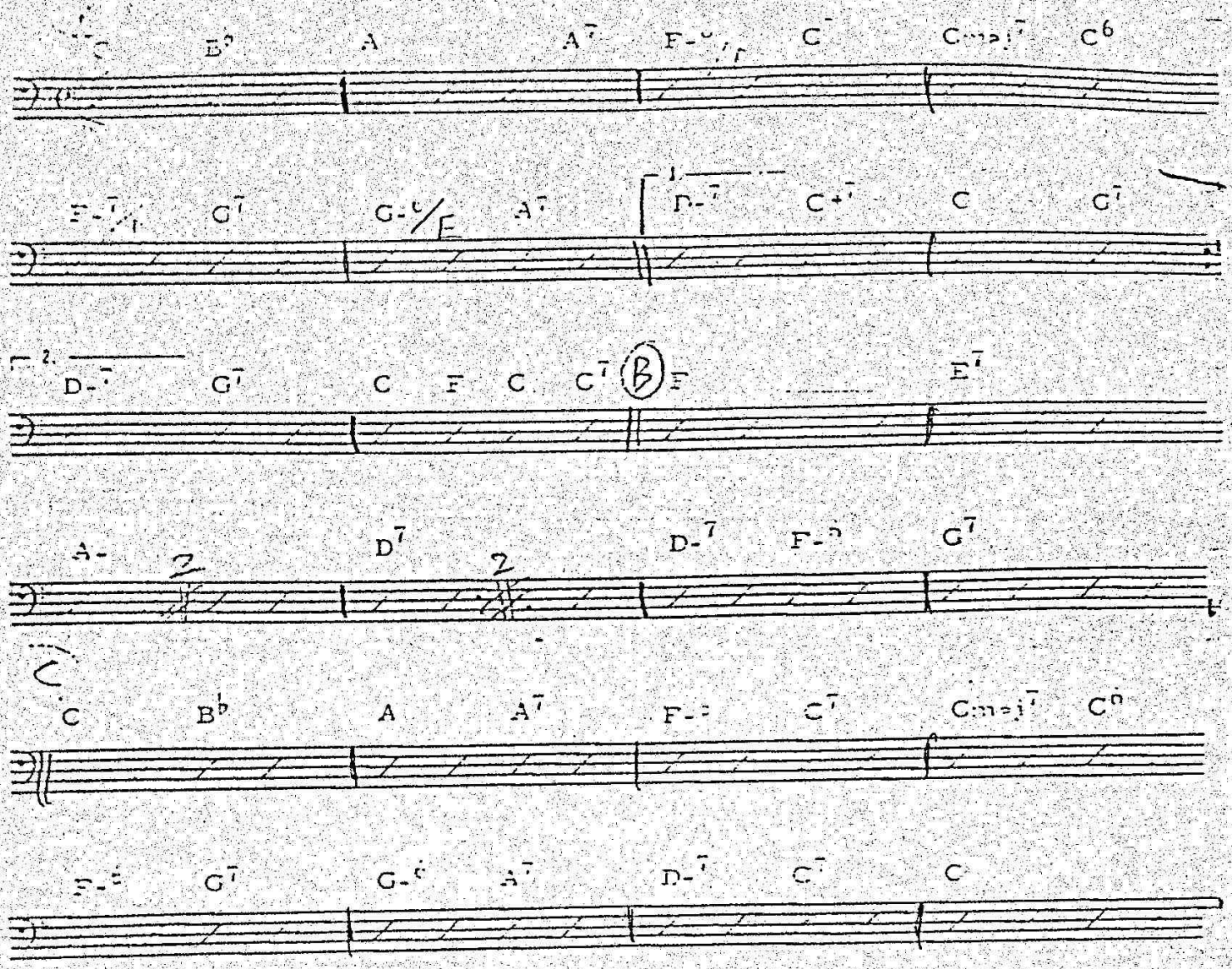
This common pattern works like the pattern in part three where roots were approached by ½ step above. This kind of motion gives smooth strong bass lines.

Lines played using this technique on dominent motion chord changes (i.e., G to C to F to Bb to Eb to Ab to Db to Gb to B to E to A to D - either major, dominant 7th, or augmented chords) produce the same lines as in part two where the root, then the third of the chord was played:



This technique is quite useful when you have a minor chord for four beats. You can get away with playing a major third on a minor chord when it gives you such a strong melodic movement. This technique is also used often on the 9th and 10th measure of the blues.

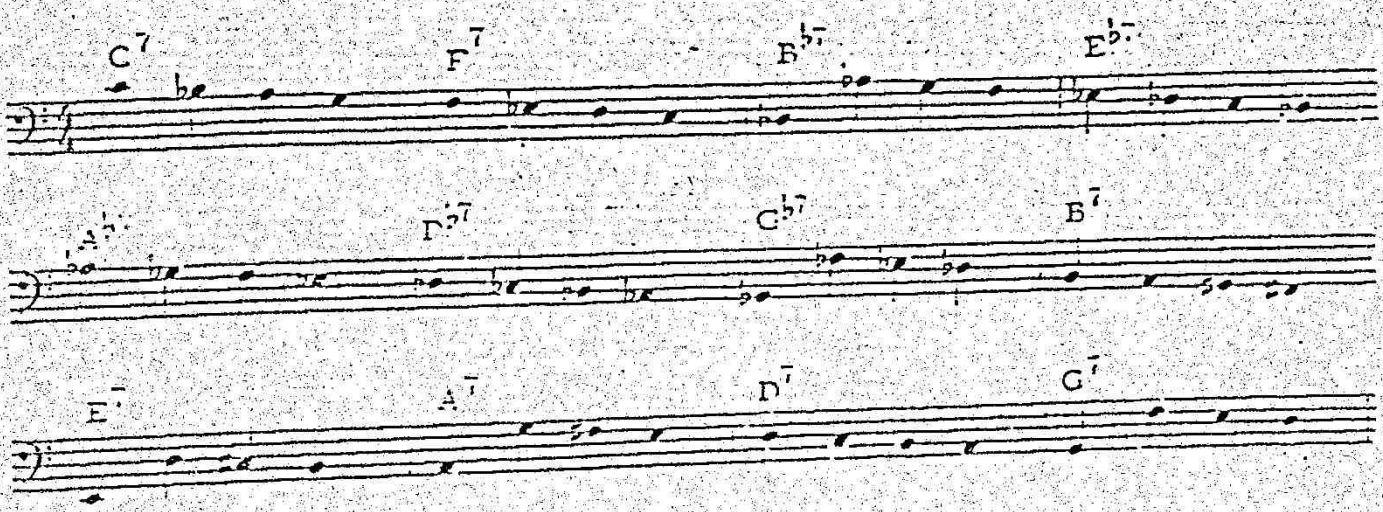


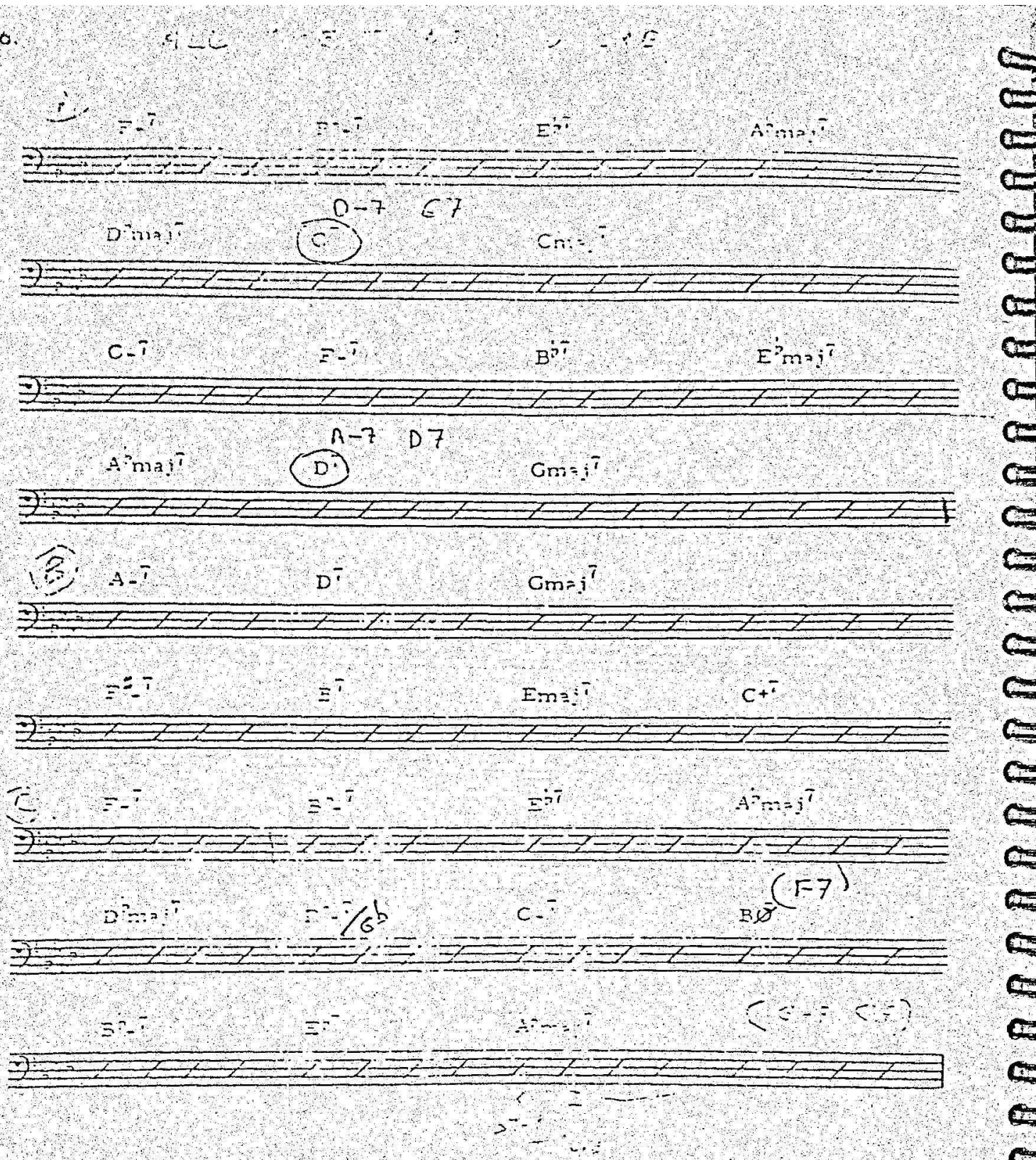

C B♭ A A7 F-6/F C Cmaj7 C6
F-7/F G7 G-6/F A7 D-7 C+7 C G7
D-7 G7 C F C C7 B F E7
A- D7 D-7 F-6 G7
C B♭ A A7 F-6 C7 Cmaj7 C6
F-6 G7 G-6 A7 D-7 C7 C

PART FIVE: PLAY THE ROOT, THEN APPROACH THE NEXT ROOT FROM A STEP ABOVE

This pattern is not as common as the previous patterns, but it is still a useful working concept to produce strong moving bass lines. The note, a step above, should be in the scale defined by the chord change pattern it is part of (see the pages in this book that list II-7 V7 patterns and the keys they define).

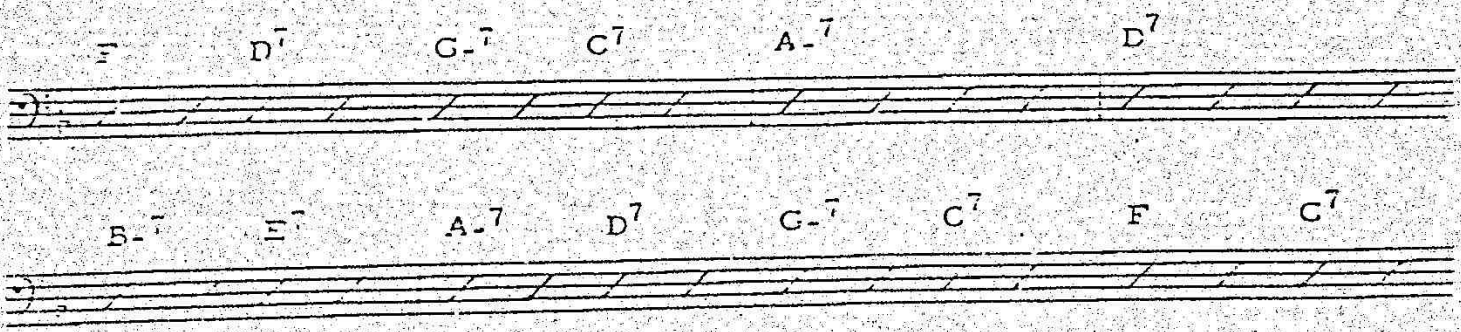
The following exercise is a good example of the way this technique works:




F-7
B♭-7
E♭7
A♭maj7
D♭maj7
C-7
C7
Cmaj7
C-7
F-7
B♭7
E♭maj7
A♭maj7
A-7
D7
D♭7
Gmaj7
A-7
D7
Gmaj7
F-7
E7
Emaj7
C+7
F-7
B♭-7
E♭7
A♭maj7
D♭maj7
F-7/6♭
C-7
BØ
(F-7)
B♭-7
E♭7
A♭maj7
(C-7 C7)

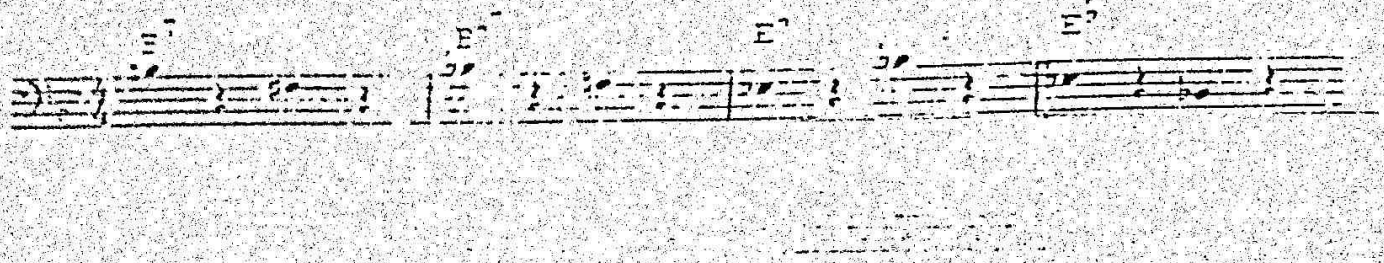
PART SEVEN: PLAY THE ROOTS IN OCTAVES

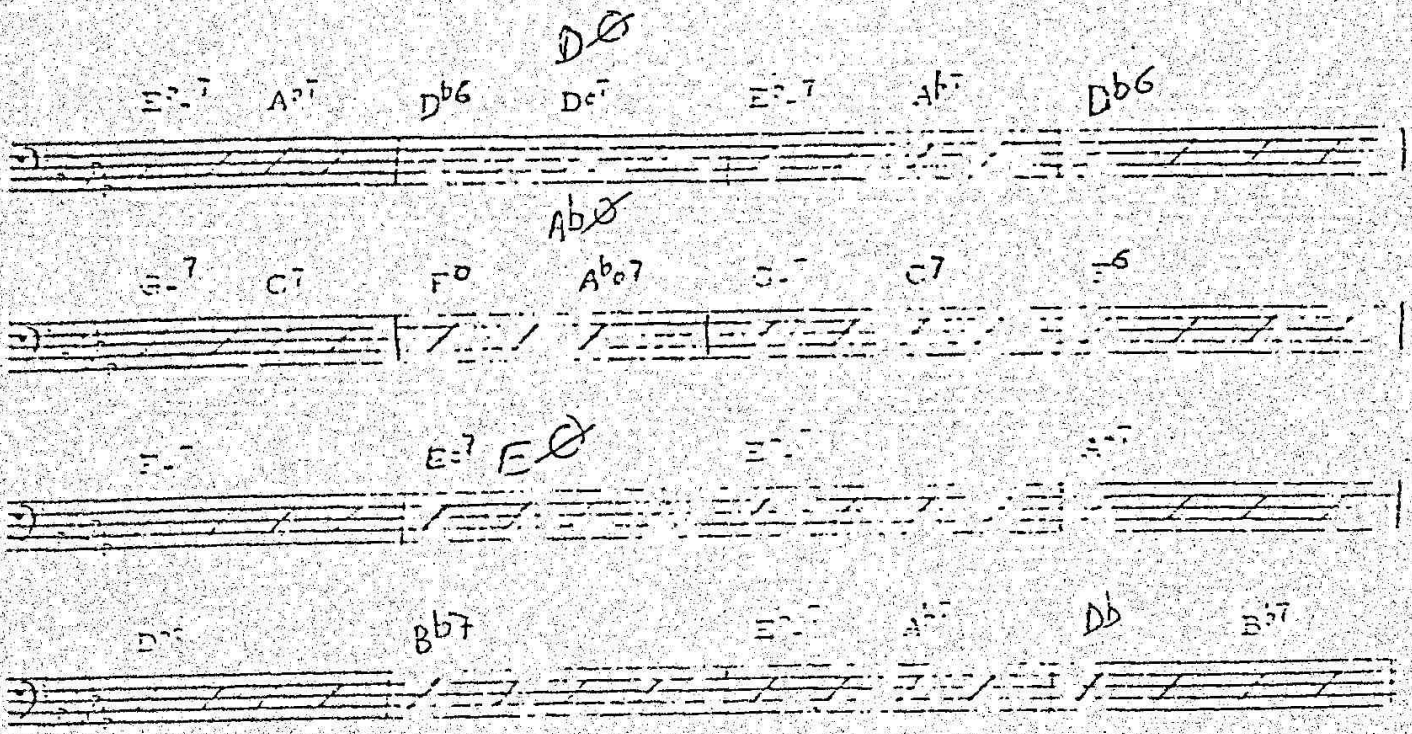
The roots of chords form the basis of jazz bass lines; but it can be boring and dull to be playing the same note in the same register over and over again. One way to bring variety to your lines, and keep the sound of roots in the bass lines, is to play the same note in octaves on the instrument. Usually contrary motion is the device to use here (i.e., play the first root up an octave, the second root down one, etc., as in the following example.)



PART SIX: PLAY THE ROOT AND FIFTH OF THE CHORD

Most bass line books of the past stressed the root/fifth notes of a chord as the most important ones. This book disagrees with that concept: the most important notes in a bass line are the roots and the notes that connect them. However, roots and fifths are good to use in two-beat patterns used in Dixieland and Commercial General Business music.





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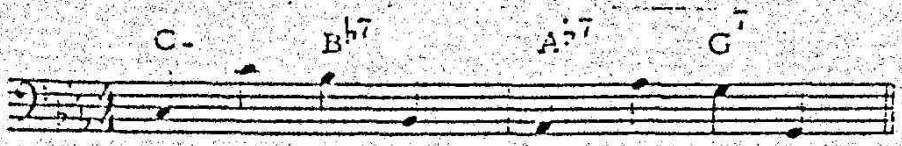
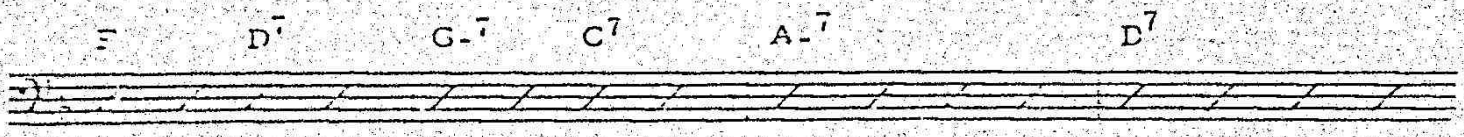
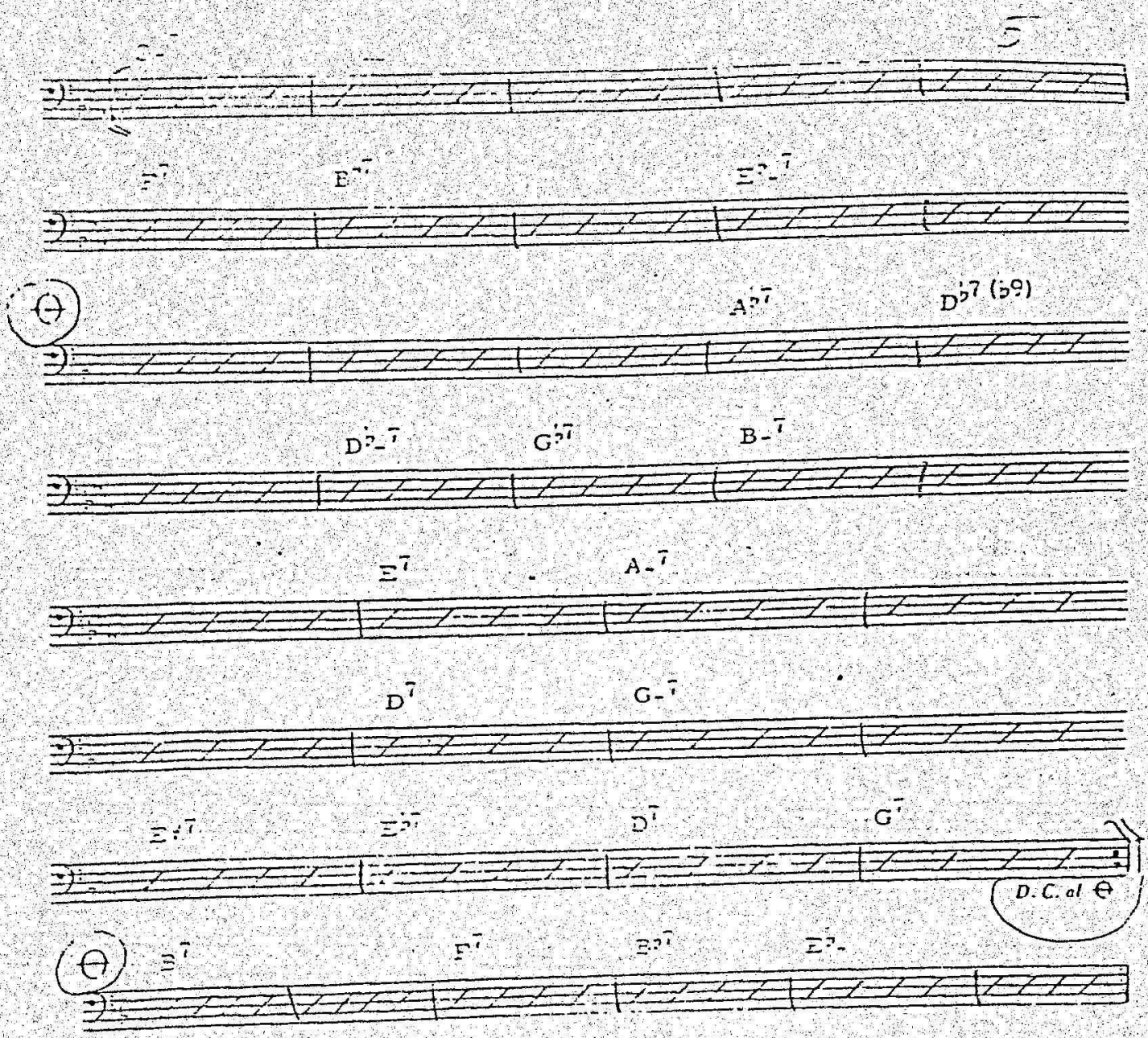
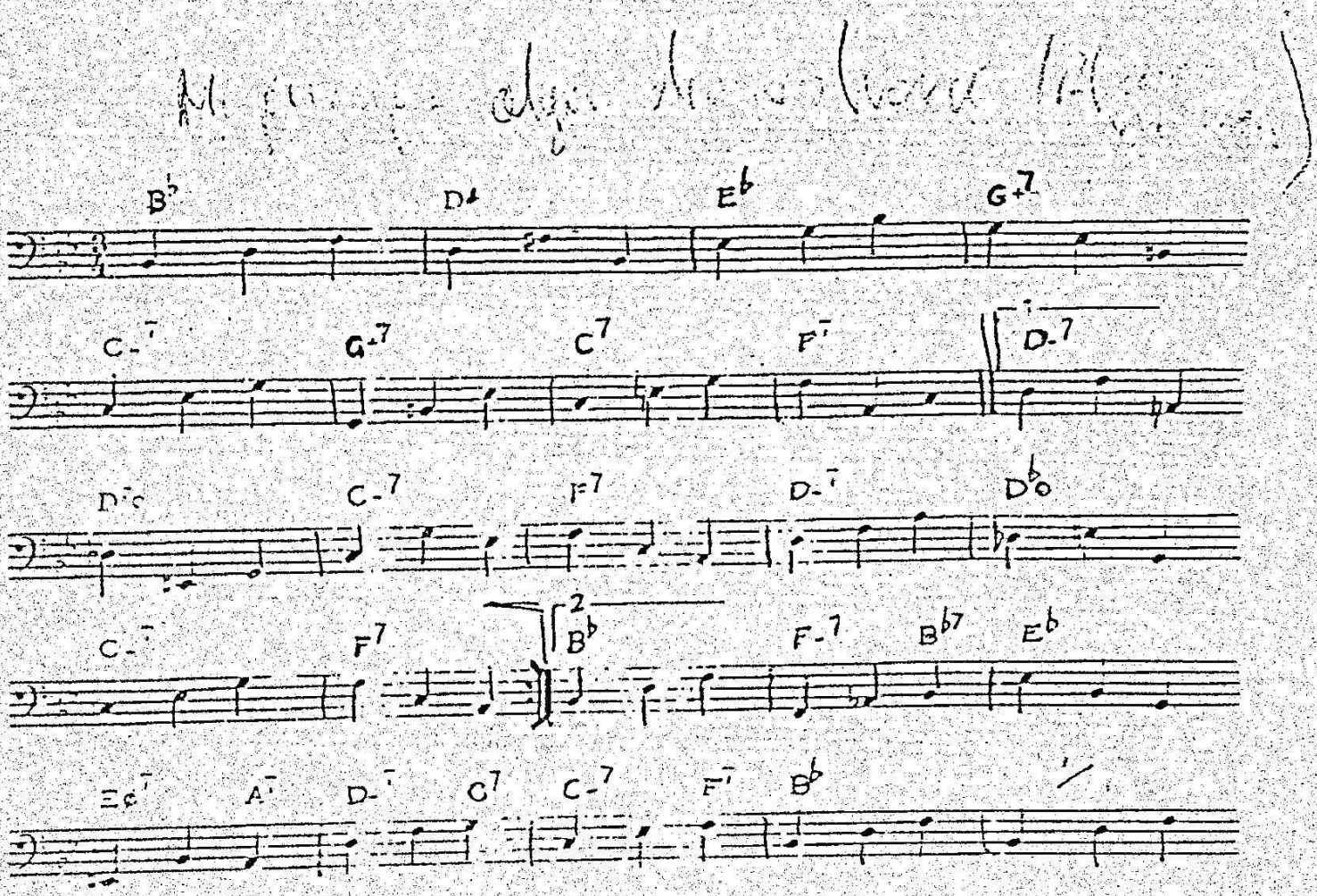


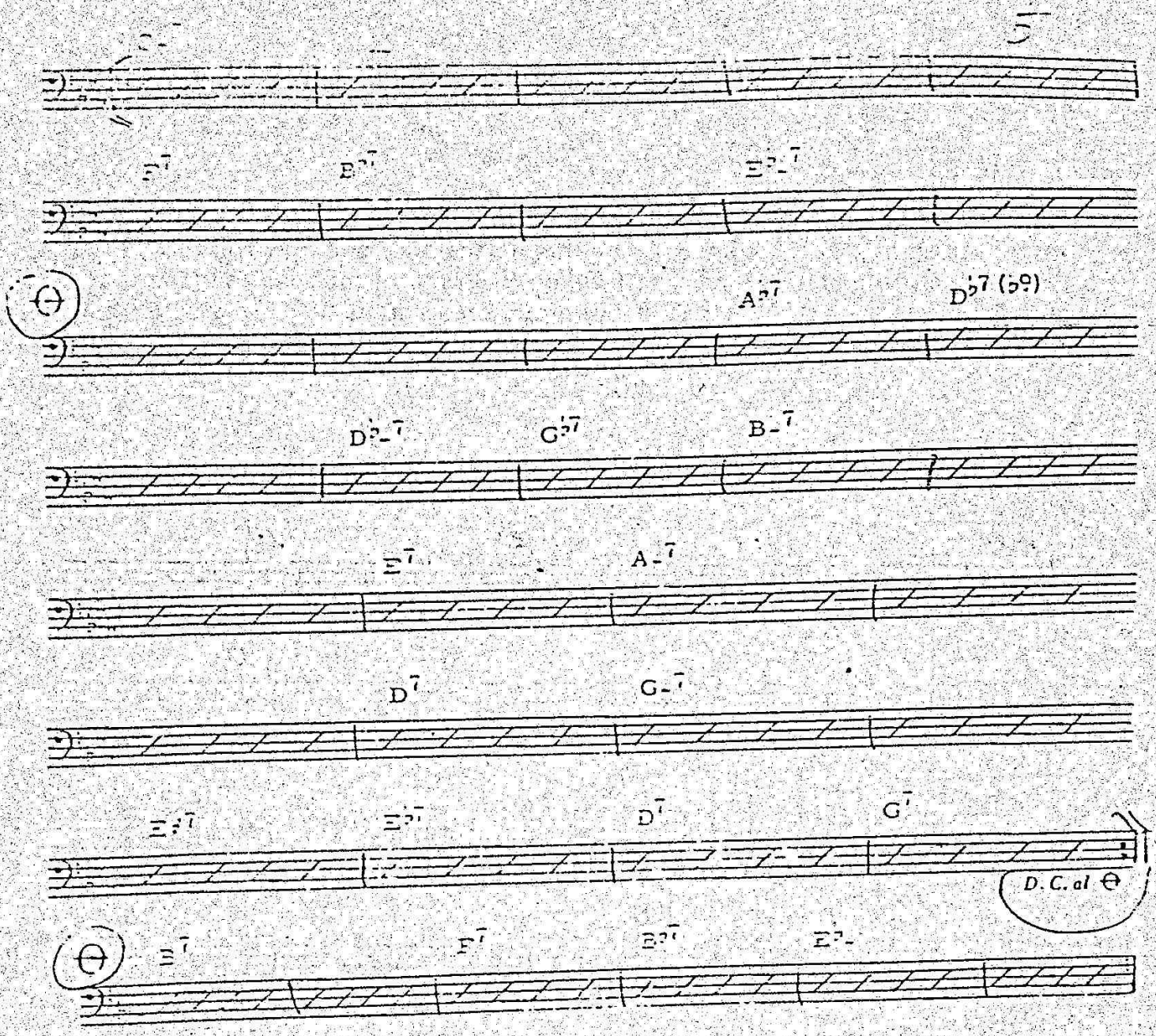



F7
E♭7
E♭-7
A♭7
D♭7 (♭9)
D♭-7
G♭7
B-7
E7
A-7
D7
G-7
E♭7
E♭7
D7
G7
D.C. al ⊖
E7
F7
B♭7
E♭-

PART EIGHT: PLAY TRIADS STARTING ON THE ROOT OF THE CHORD

Another effective concept for creating good strong lines is to outline the basic triads of the chords of the composition. This means after you play the root, then play the third of the chord, then the fifth; or play the fifth then the third. You are spelling out, on your bass, the basic harmonic structure of the tune. This method is especially useful on waltzes.

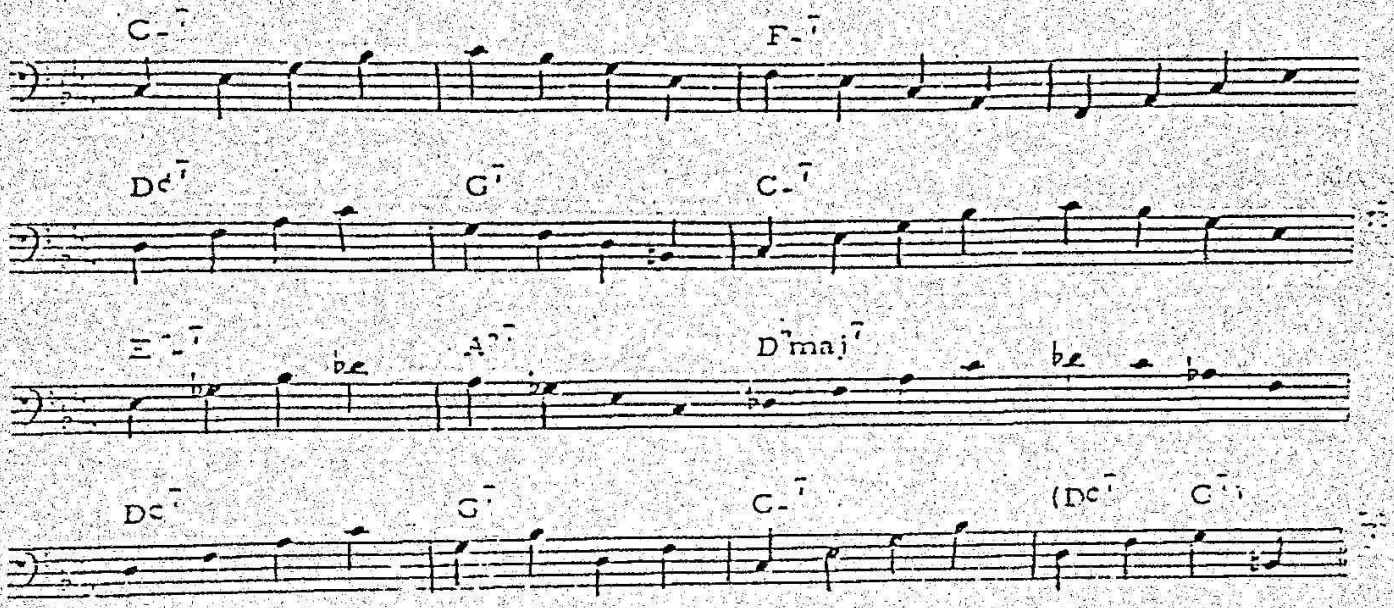



E♭7
B♭7
E♭-7
A♭7
D♭7 (♭9)
D♭-7
G♭7
B-7
E7
A-7
D7
G-7
E♭7
E♭7
D7
G7
D.C. al ⊖
B7
F7
B♭7
E♭-

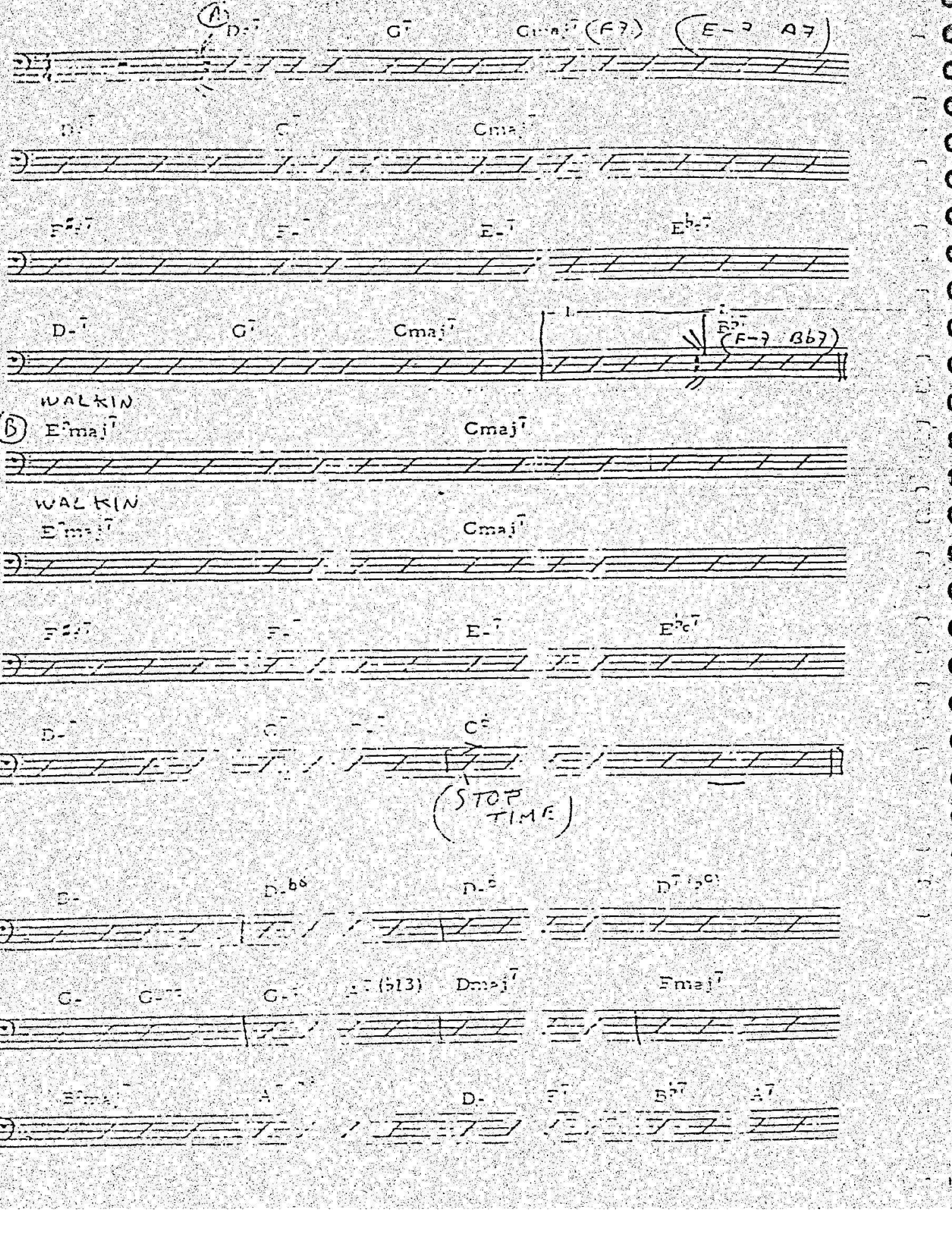
PART NINE: PLAY THE WHOLE CHORD, STARTING ON THE ROOT (ARPEGGIOS)

This is the same general concept as in part eight, but now you add the rest of the notes of the chord. This creates arpeggio-like bass lines.

BLUE BOSSA

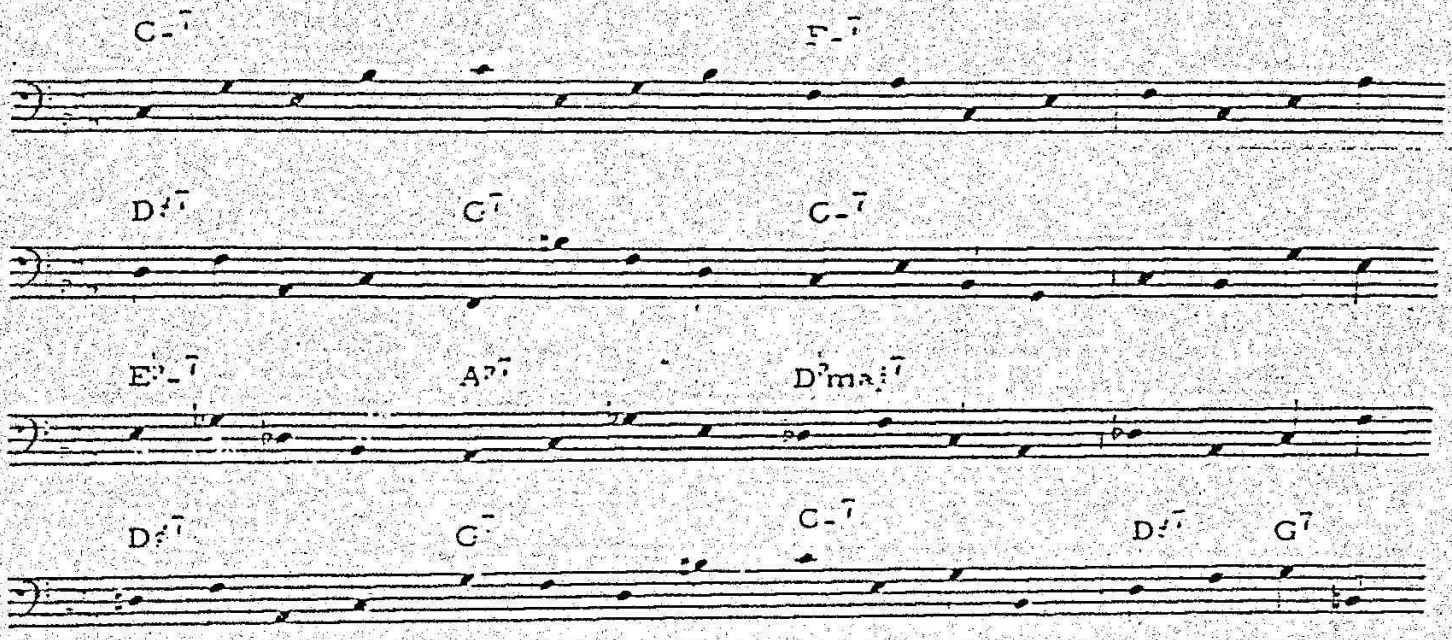


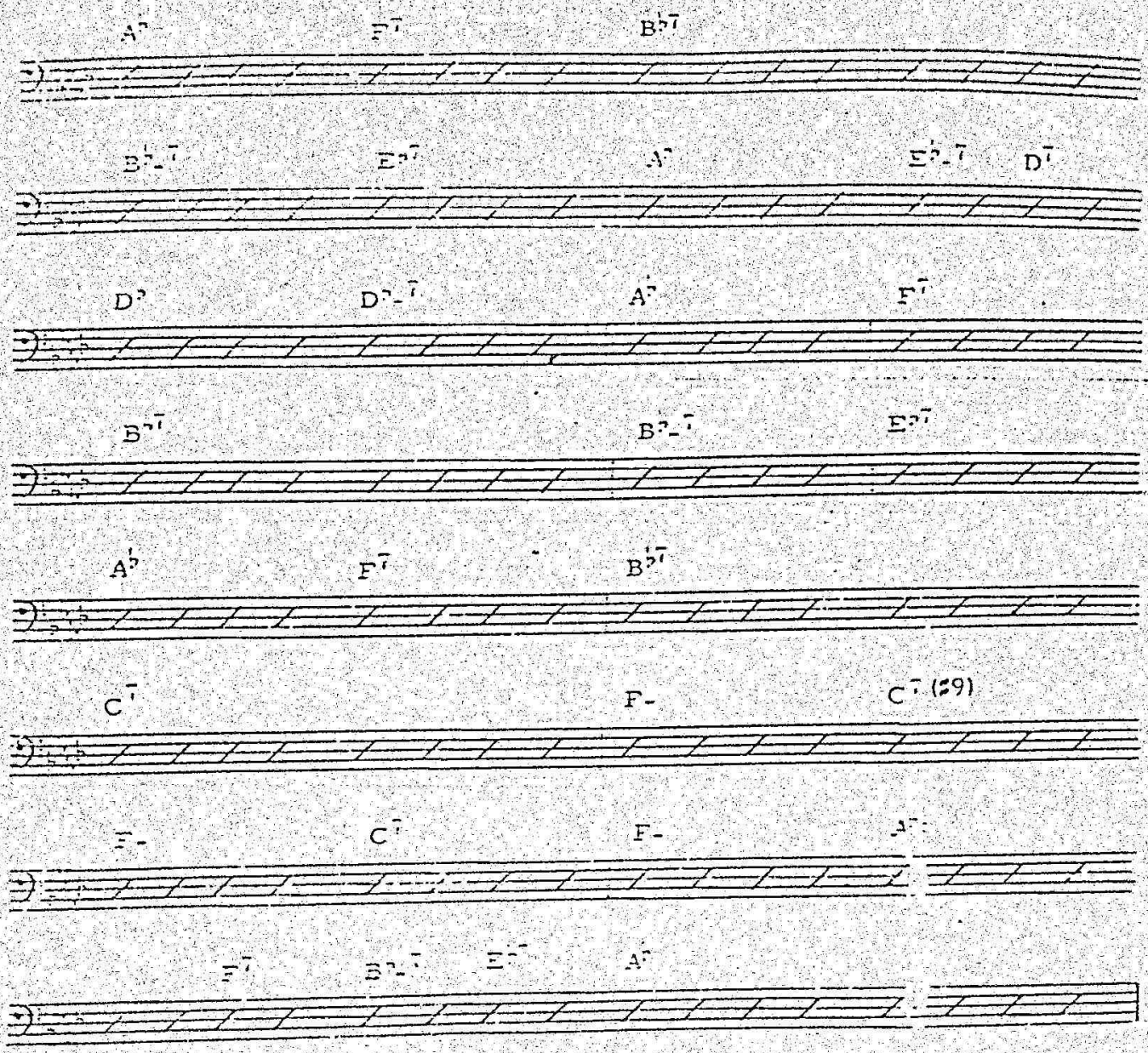
NIGHT AND DAY



PART TEN: PLAY INVERSIONS OF THE CHORDS, ROOTS ON THE STRONG BEATS

This is a further extension of part nine, now you are being freer with the notes of the chord.

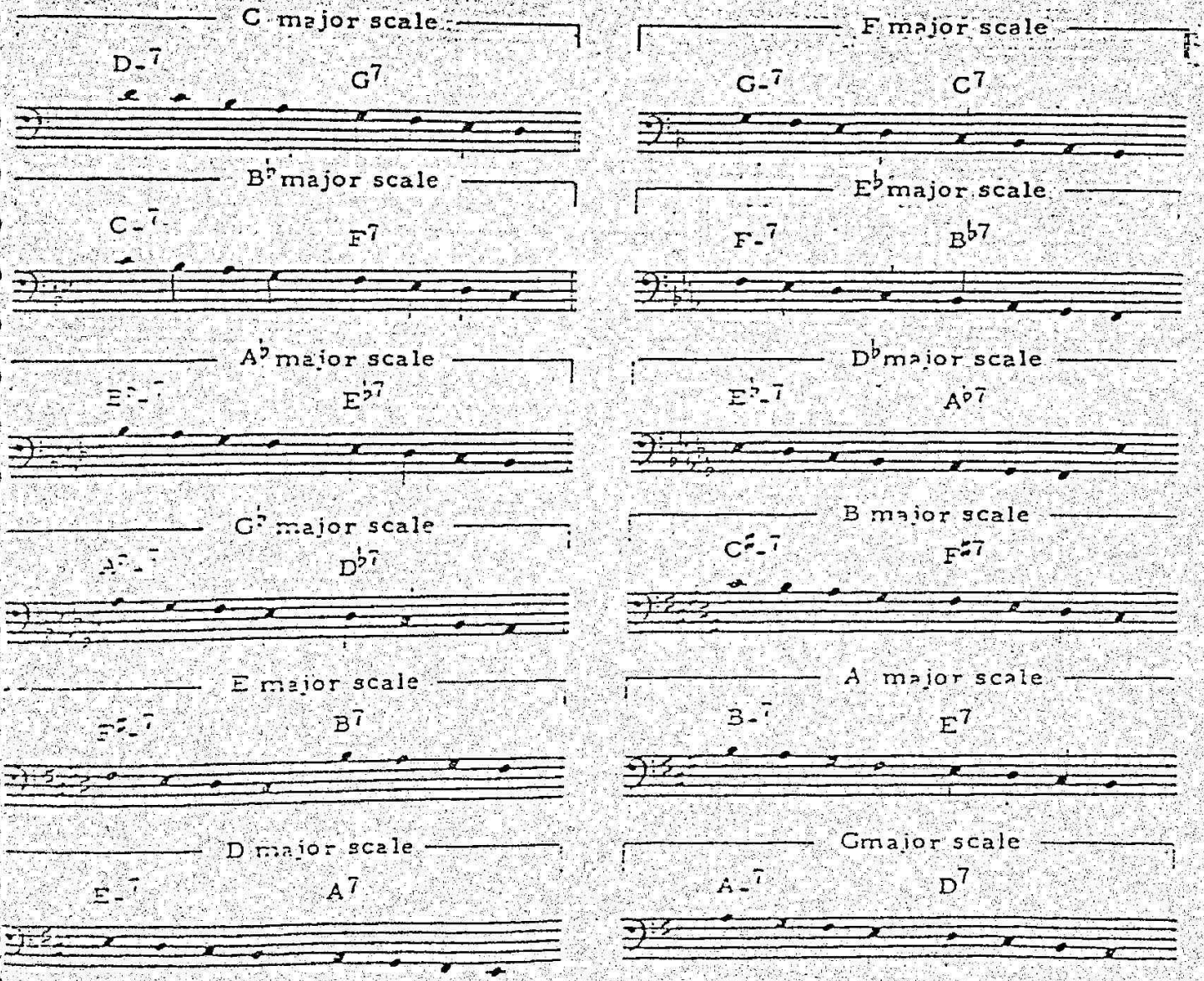


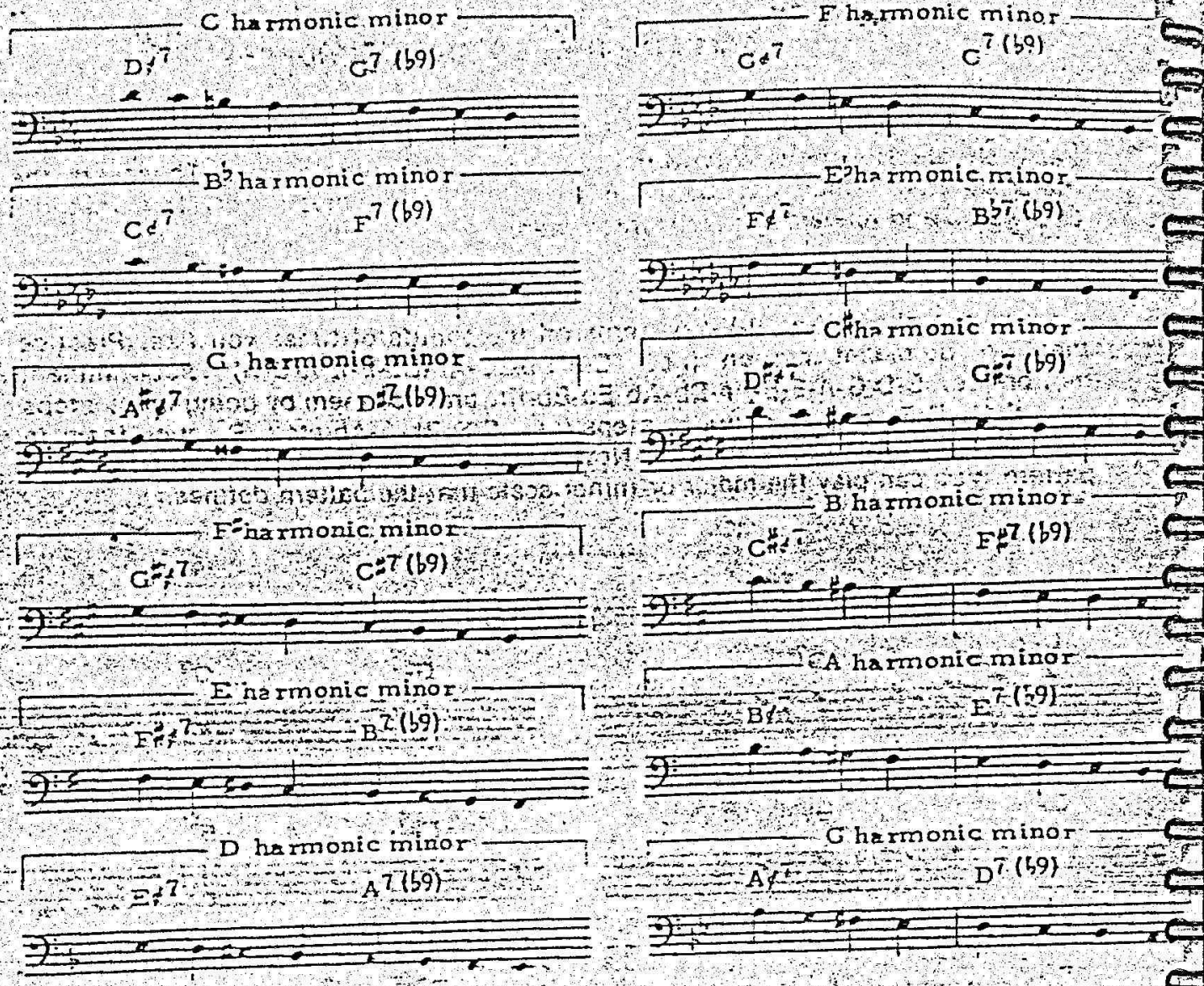

A♭
F7
B♭7
B♭-7
E♭7
A♭
E♭-7
D7
D♭
D♭-7
A♭
F7
B♭7
B♭-7
E♭7
A♭
F7
B♭7
C7
F-
C7 (♯9)
F-
C7
F-
A♭
F7
B♭-7
E♭7
A♭

PART ELEVEN: PLAY THE SCALE THAT THE CHORD DEFINES, START ON THE ROOT OF THE CHORD

For this one, we'll have to back up a little bit. In the front of this book, all of the basic chords and the twenty-four II-V-I patterns are written out. These are the materials from which jazz bass lines are built. You must know this material backwards and forwards on your instrument.

Practice the chords and II-V-I patterns on the chords of tunes you like. Practice them in dominant motion (i.e., C-F-Bb-Eb-Ab-Db-B-E-A-D-G); subdominant motion (i.e., C-D-G-A-E-B-F#-Db-Ab-Eb-Bb-F); practice them by going up ½ steps (i.e., C-C#-D-Eb-etc.) or down ½ steps (i.e., C-B-Bb-A-Ab-etc.). Practice them in any way that you can come up with. Now, back to part eleven. When you see a II-V-I pattern, you can play the major or minor scale that the pattern defines.

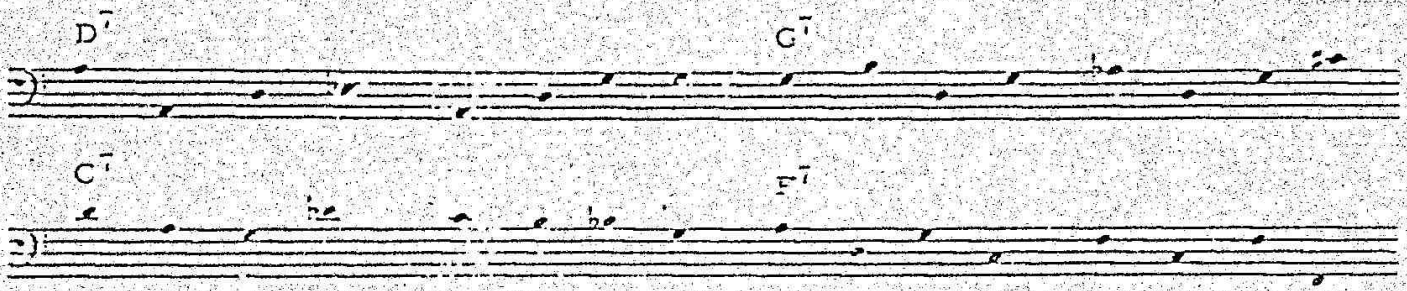



C harmonic minor
D♭7
C7 (♭9)
B♭ harmonic minor
C♯7
F7 (♭9)
G harmonic minor
A♯♯7
D♯7 (♭9)
F harmonic minor
G♯7
C♯7 (♭9)
E harmonic minor
F♯♯7
B7 (♭9)
D harmonic minor
E♯7
A7 (♭9)
F harmonic minor
C♯7
C7 (♭9)
E♭ harmonic minor
F♯7
B♭7 (♭9)
C♯ harmonic minor
D♯♯7
G♯7 (♭9)
B harmonic minor
C♯♯7
F♯7 (♭9)
A harmonic minor
B♯7
E7 (♭9)
G harmonic minor
A♯♯7
D7 (♭9)

PART THIRTEEN: PLAY FREELY IN SCALE CHROMATIC AREAS

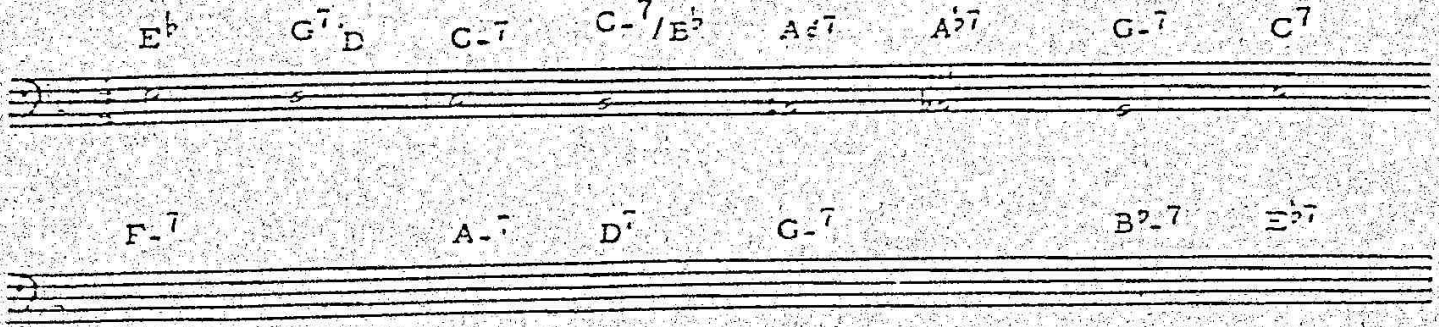
And to finish this first section of How to Play Jazz Bass Lines, with part thirteen you now have full chromatic possibilities. (you can play any note any place) if you musical about it.

Dig how we got to this point: You play roots. You play roots and chord or scale tones to connect these roots. You play roots and connect them chromatically. Now you can emphasize the chromatic connecting notes, as well as chord and scale tones. This means - if you do it musically, like in the Charlie Haden style below, any note works if it makes sense to your (and your fellow musicians') ears. So you can play chromatic connecting notes and not necessarily connect them. Play the following example to hear this concepy in action.

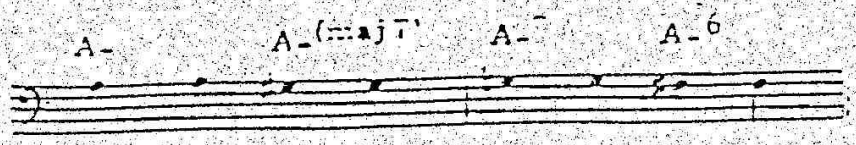


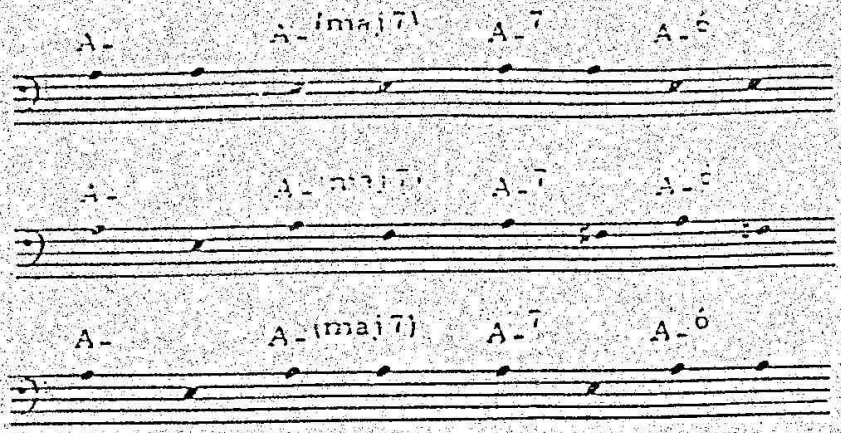
SOME DO'S AND DON'TS OF PLAYING JAZZ BASS LINES

1. Don't overplay. Maturity = Economy. This is especially true for guitar players who double electric bass. The bass is the base of the ensemble: it is the foundation from which melodies and harmonies are built. And as the foundation, don't be "busy."
2. Bass is a very physical instrument. Keep your shoulders and wrists somewhat loose. Hold the bass comfortably on your hip. Don't tap your foot unless the drummer or piano player or guitarist are goofing so badly that you need to really know where the time is. Let the time simply come from your body. If you must tap, tap with your heel and not your toes. This will help you keep right on top of the beat.
3. Don't fight the drummer. If he's dragging, then stay on top of the time. If he's rushing, lay behind the beat. But always think of the musical sound of the entire group rather than any metronomic time.
4. The earlier styles of jazz had the bass playing in two (two notes per 4/4 measure) and generally playing the root and fifth. The more modern the jazz the more you can emphasize non-root notes. But for swing music (i.e., the 1930's and '40's) don't be afraid to play even four roots per beat.
5. In modal tunes (tunes built on one or two scales such as So What by Miles Davis) play freely in the mode, but stay away from tri-tones (e.g., B-F in D dorian).
6. Many tunes are built on lines, rather than the roots of chords. Play the lines then. They will be notated like: G7/D which means that you should emphasize the D note.



7. Many minor changes carry patterns that have the root note or the fifth move chromatically. You can either play the moving line, or play the stationary root or fifth. Like this:





8. A good place to get the ideas for rhythmic drops or fills for your lines is from the drummer you are playing with. Play his fills with him, or play back the fills with him.
9. The key to what volume you play at is this: can your notes be distinguished clearly in the audience? Don't play any louder or softer than that.
10. A shorter, more staccatto sound is best for Dixie and early swing styles. A longer fuller sound is better for more modern jazz.
11. In traditional and jazz harmony much is made about smooth lines, lines that don't leap around too much. But for bass it is a different story. Smooth lines without much angularity are o.k., but so are wide leaping lines. The instrument is low sounding enough that you can hop around like crazy and that can be a beautiful thing.

12. Use open strings to facilitate movement. For example, if you are in the key of Db, use the open D string as a chromatic approach so your hands stay loose.
13. The faster the tempo, the more you can play lines that don't emphasize the root so much.
14. Tenths sound very hip on bass. Use your E string with your G string.
15. Don't strain. Remember that in any one position you have the option of octaves, 5ths, 4ths, major and minor thirds all without moving your left hand.

This finishes this section of the book. The next section is the heart of the study. In classical composition, the thing to do after you know the basics is to study the works of the Masters. If you have the chords, scales and basic approaches that are in the first section of this book, you are now ready to study the work of the Jazz Masters: Ray Brown, Ron Carter and Paul Chambers.

Study the Masters' lines intellectually. Know what relationship their notes have to the chords and scales of the tune they're playing.

Play their lines, either by yourself, or with someone laying down the changes.

And after that, you are on your own. Play lines the way you dig them.

SECTION TWO

A COLLECTION OF JAZZ BASS LINES, BASED ON TRANSCRIPTIONS OF RECORDINGS BY RAY BROWN, PAUL CHAMBERS AND RON CARTER.

in the style of:		*page:*
RAY BROWN	BLUES IN C	32
PAUL CHAMBERS	BLUES IN C	35
RAY BROWN	BLUES IN F	36
PAUL CHAMBERS	BLUES IN F	40
RAY BROWN	BLUES IN B	42
RAY BROWN	BLUES IN G	53
RON CARTER	ALTERED BLUES CHANGES	54
RAY BROWN	I-VI-II-V-I PATTERNS	56
RAY BROWN	STANDARD TUNE CHANGES	57
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RAY BROWN	STANDARD TUNE CHANGES	71
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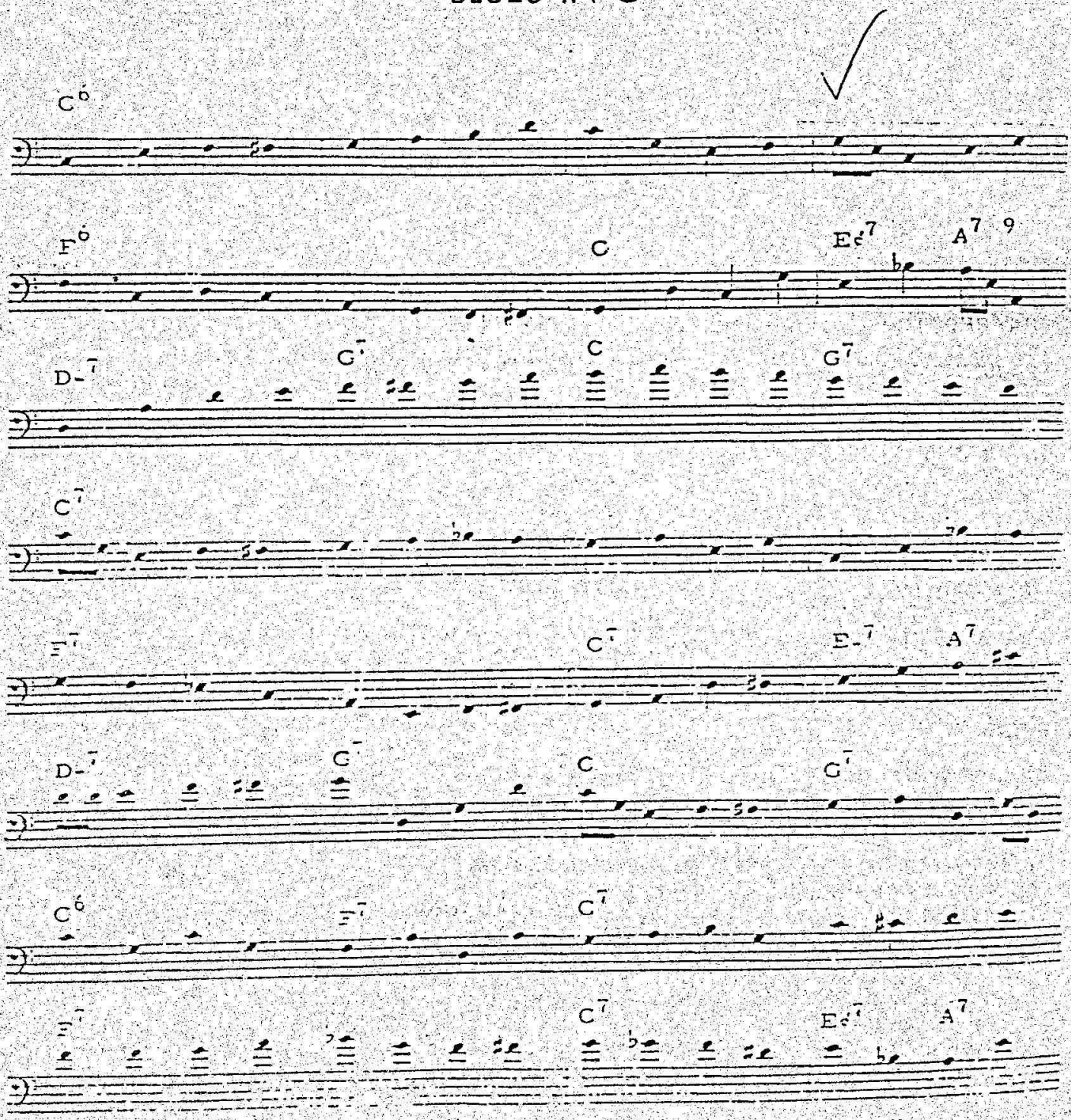
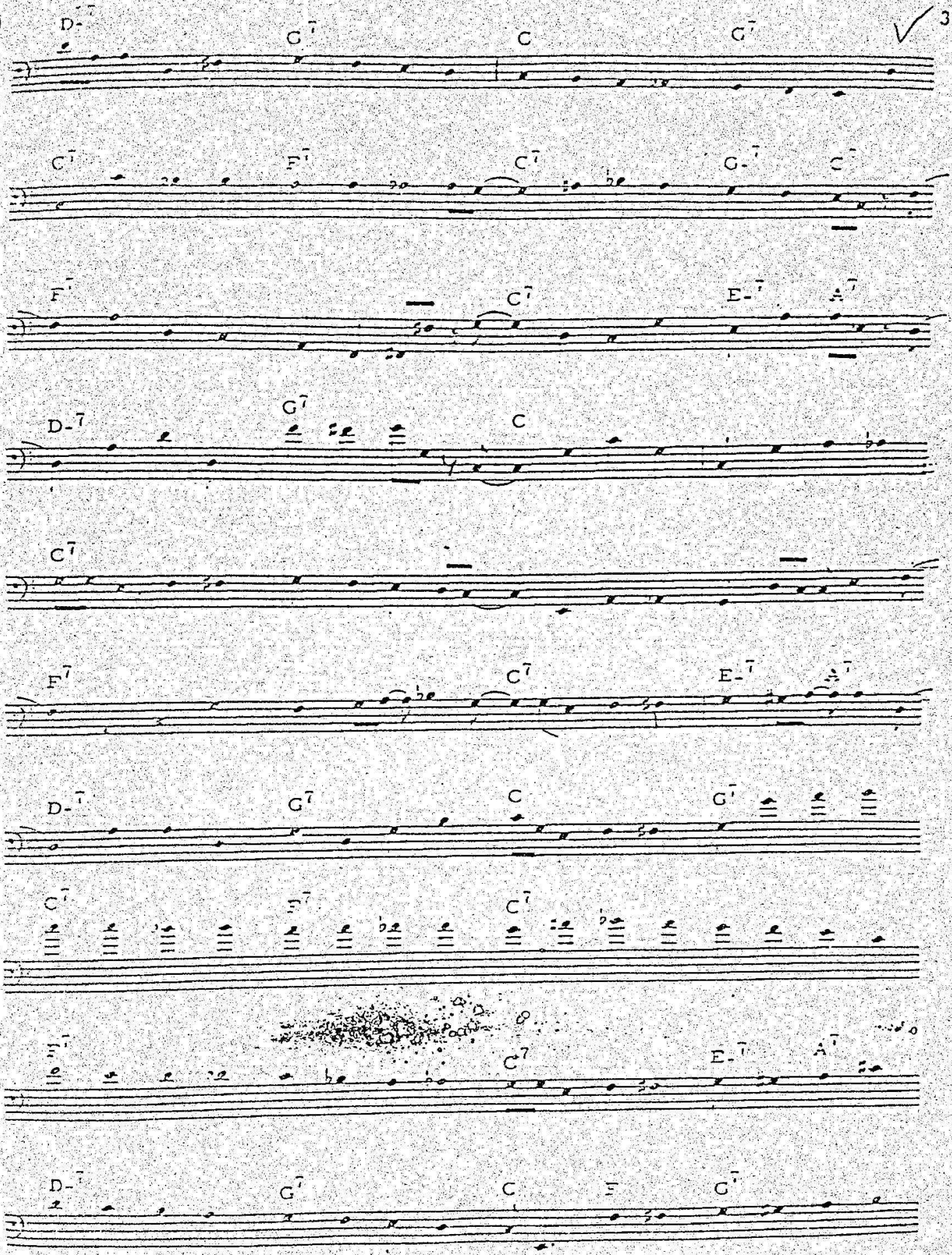
in the style of
RAY BROWN

"BLUES IN C"

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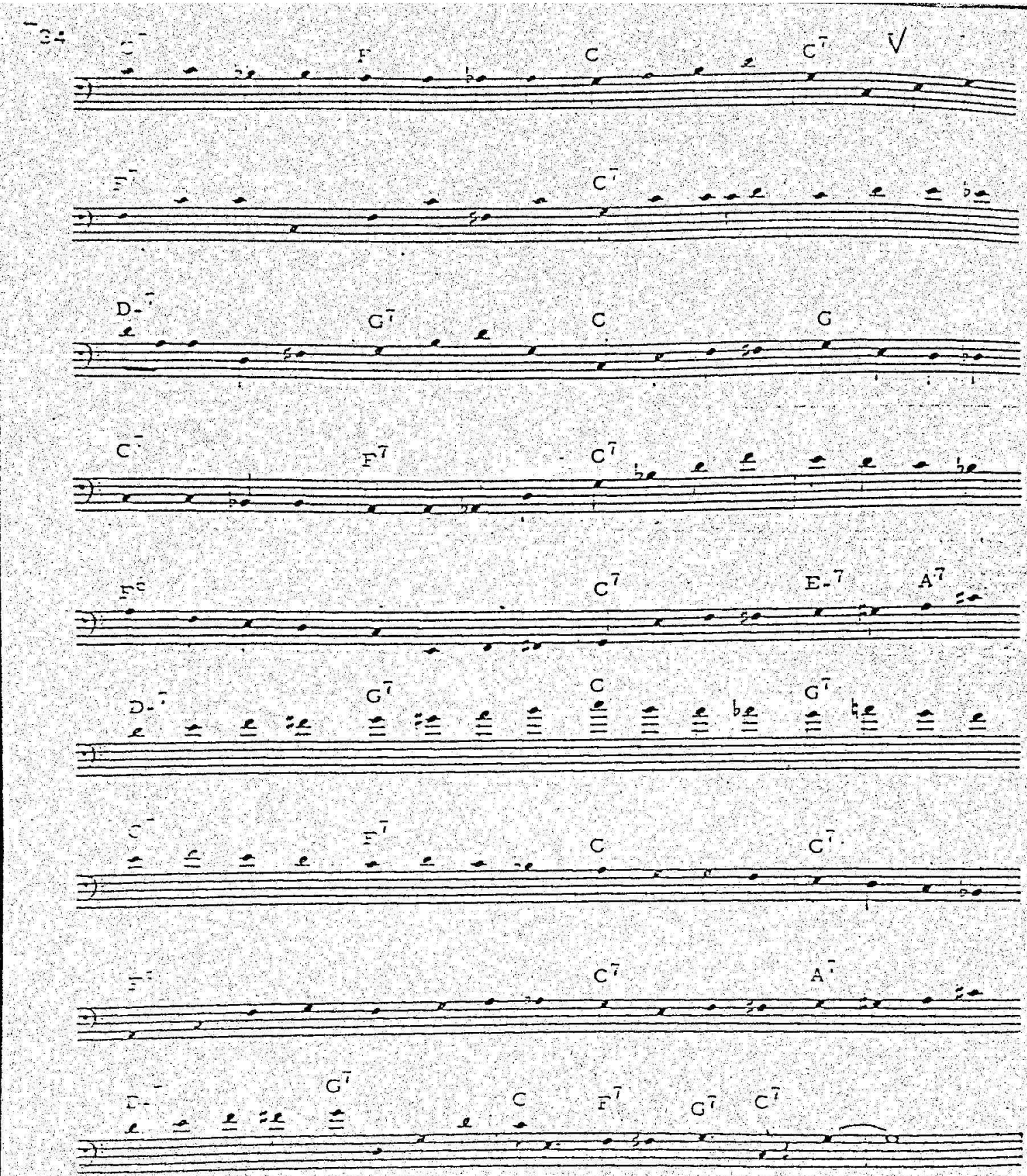
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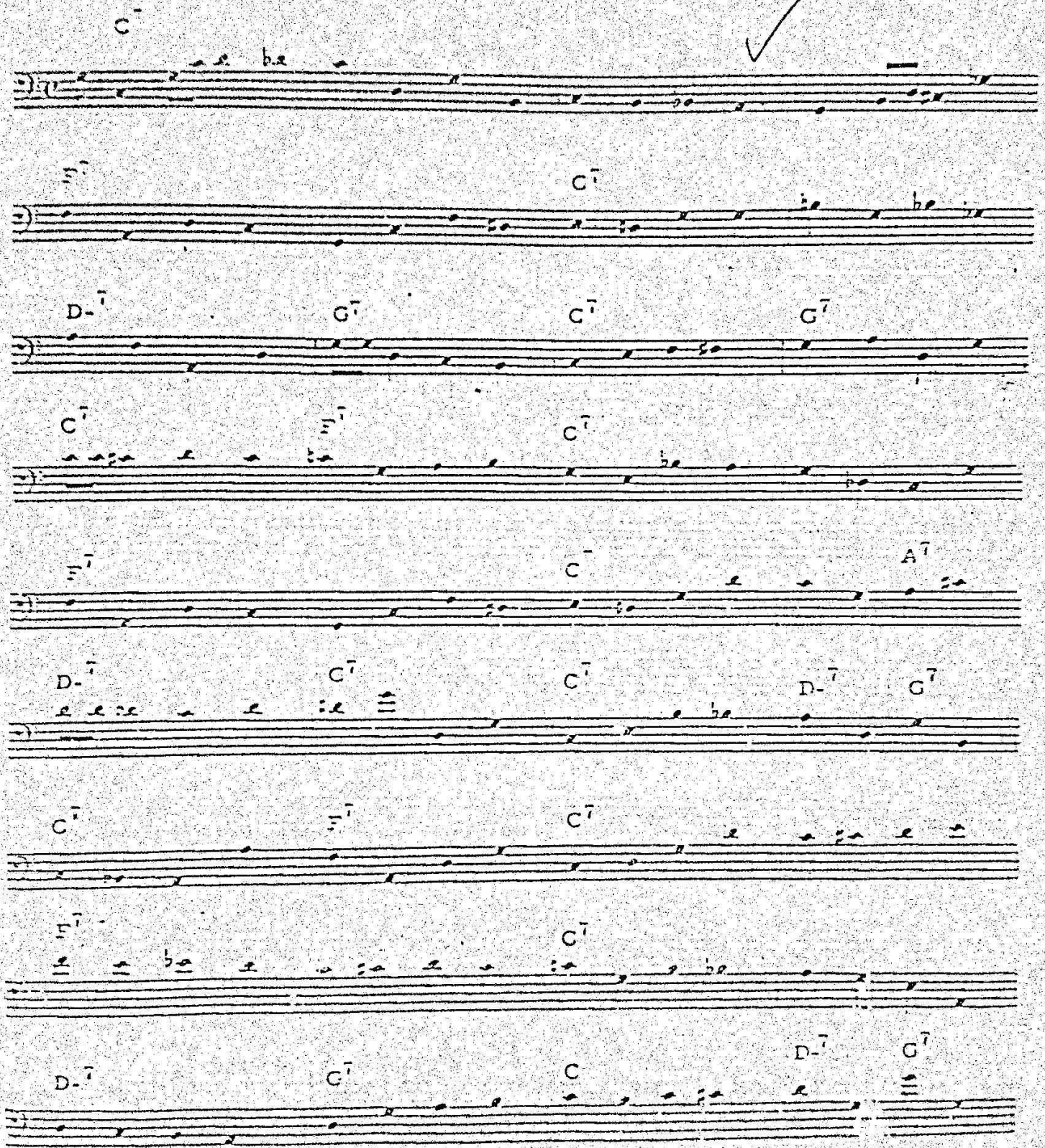
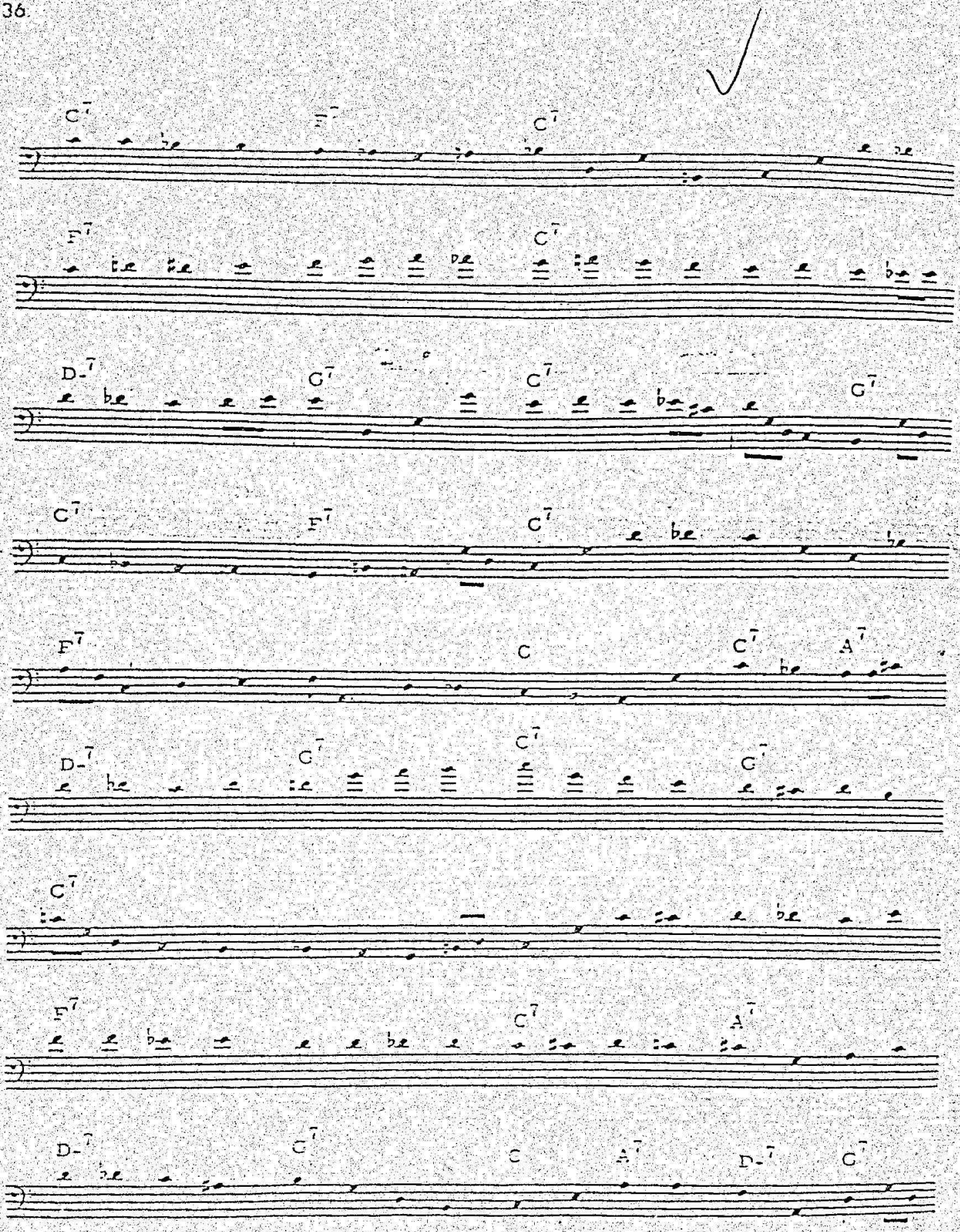
in the style of

PAUL CHAMBERS

"BLUES IN C"

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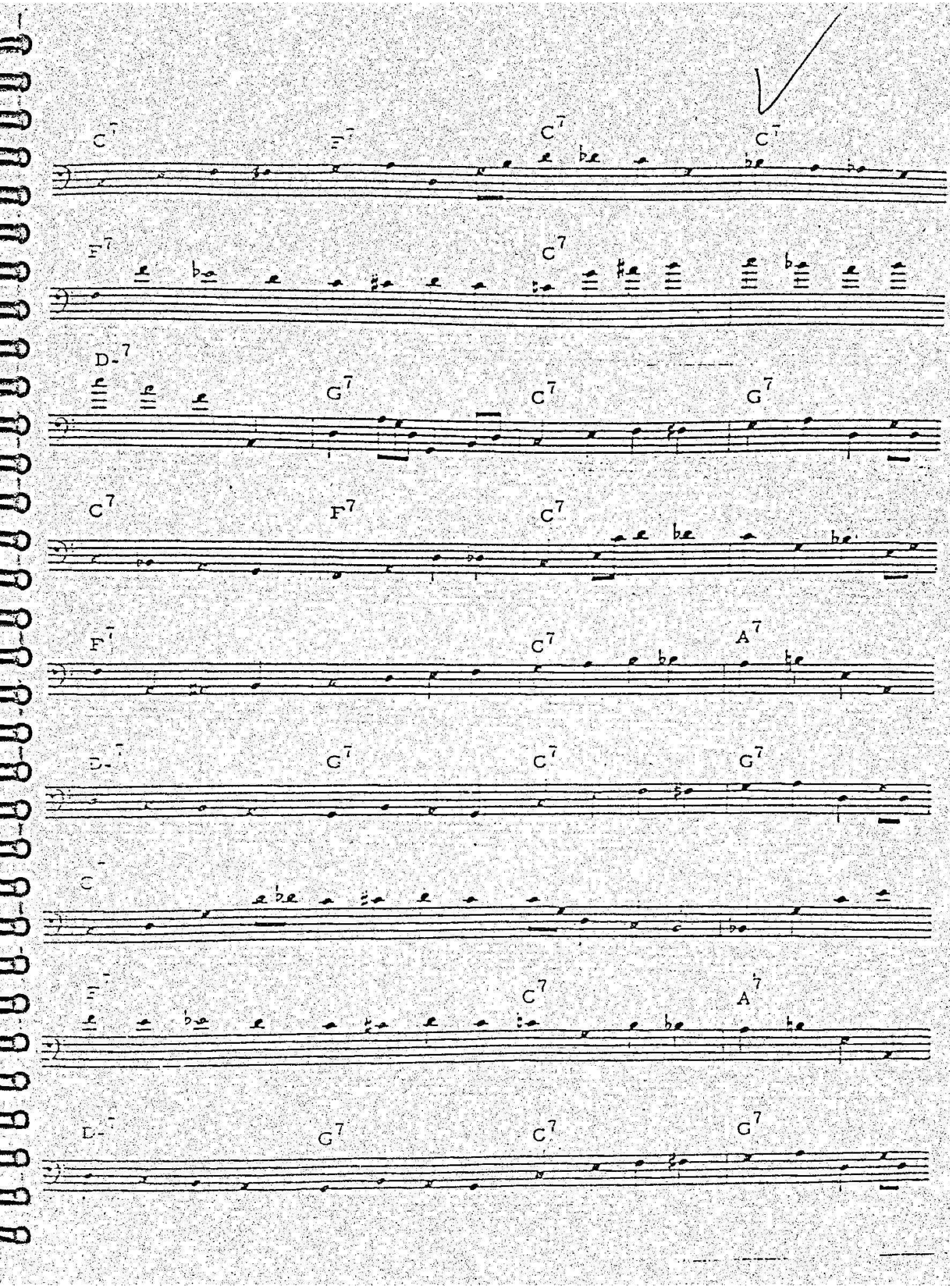
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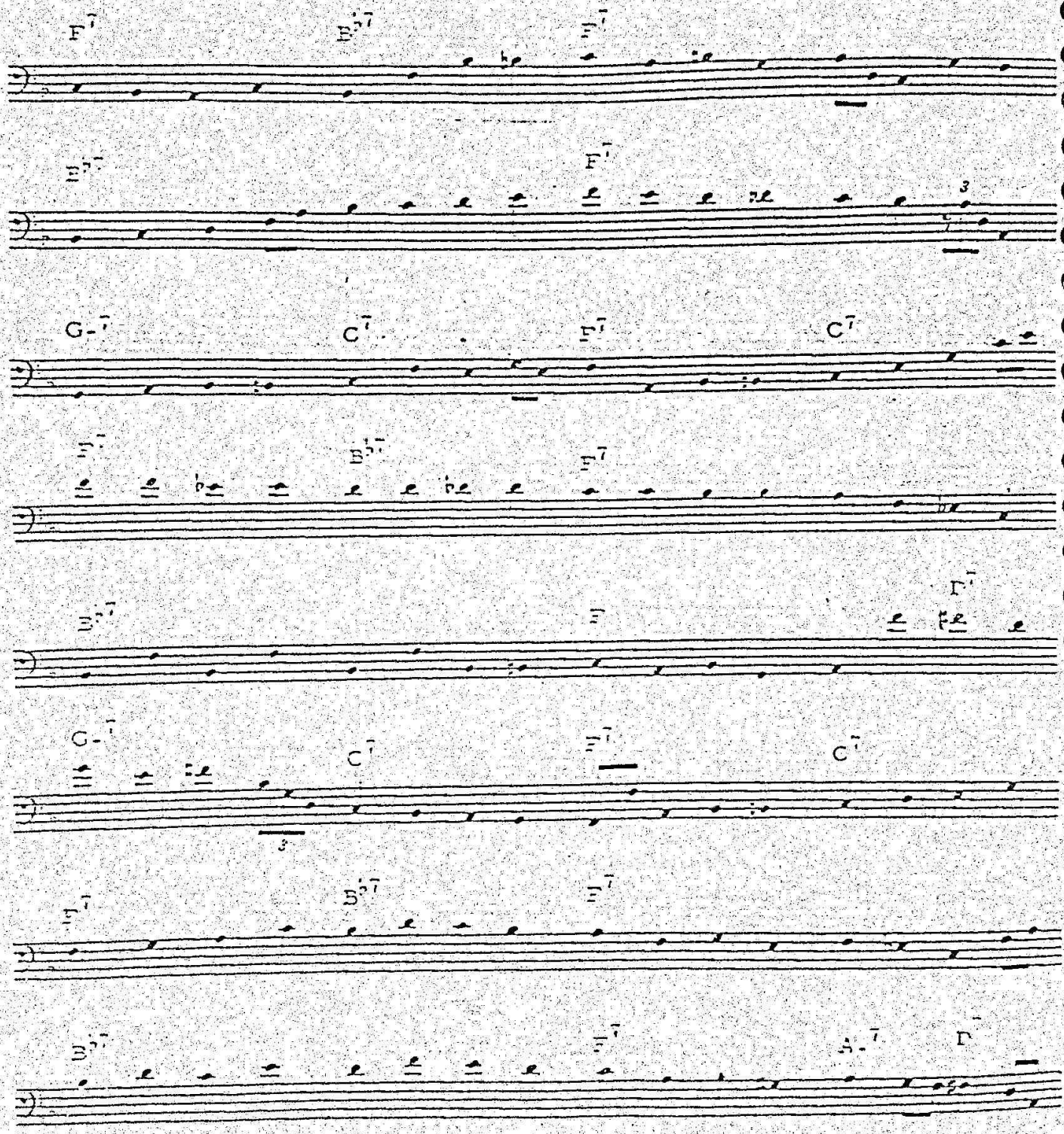
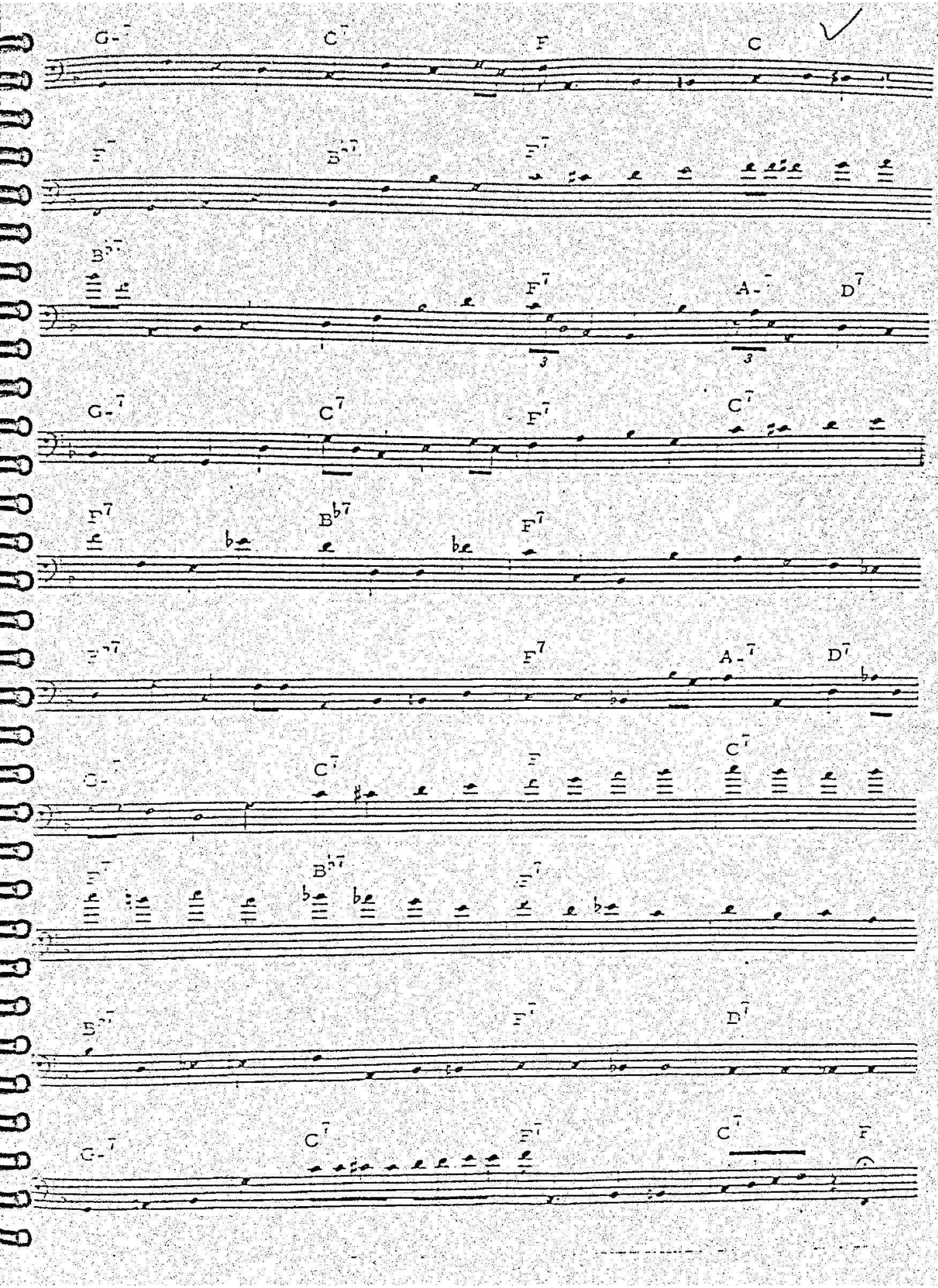
in the style of
RAY BROWN

"BLUES IN F"

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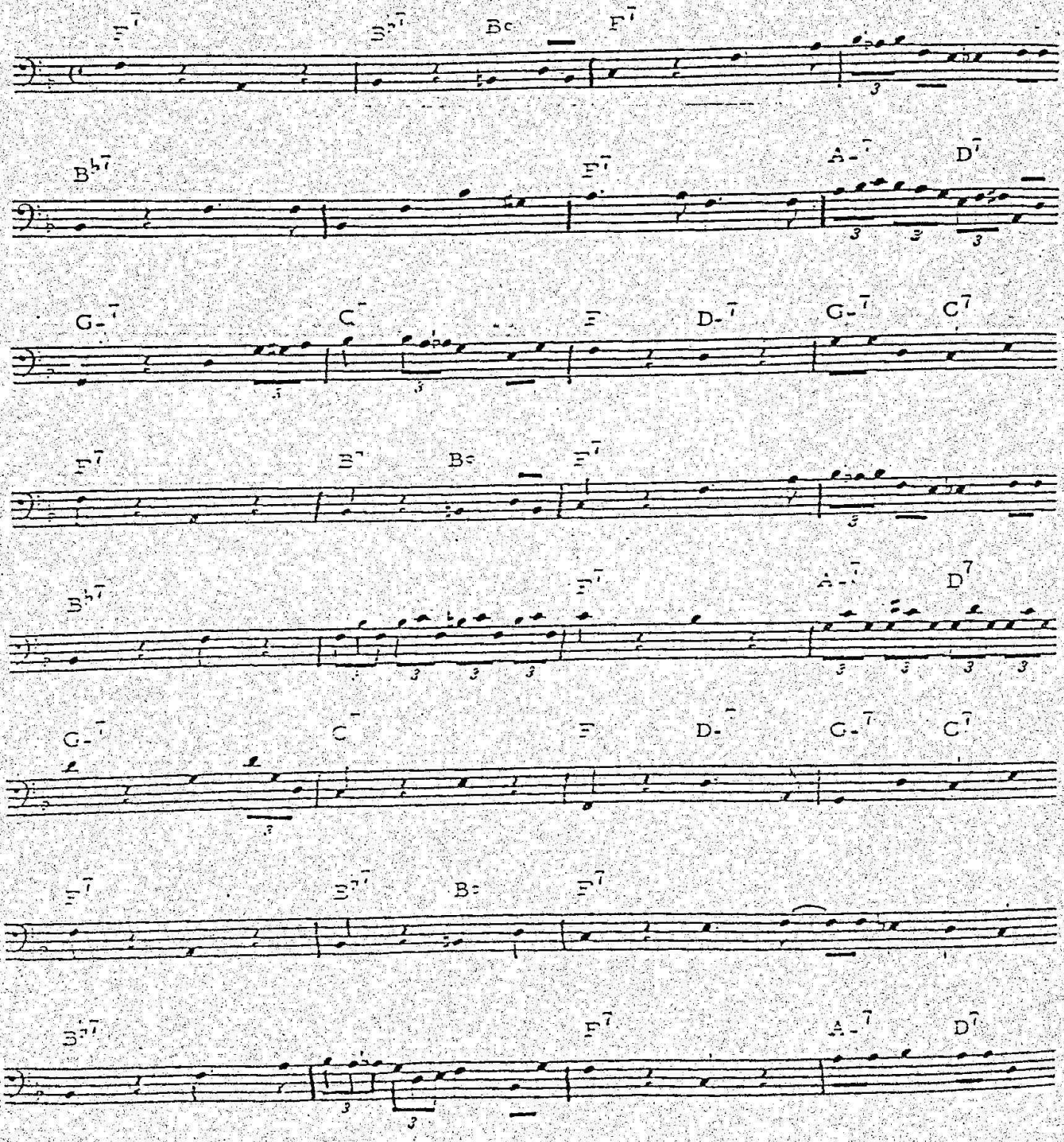
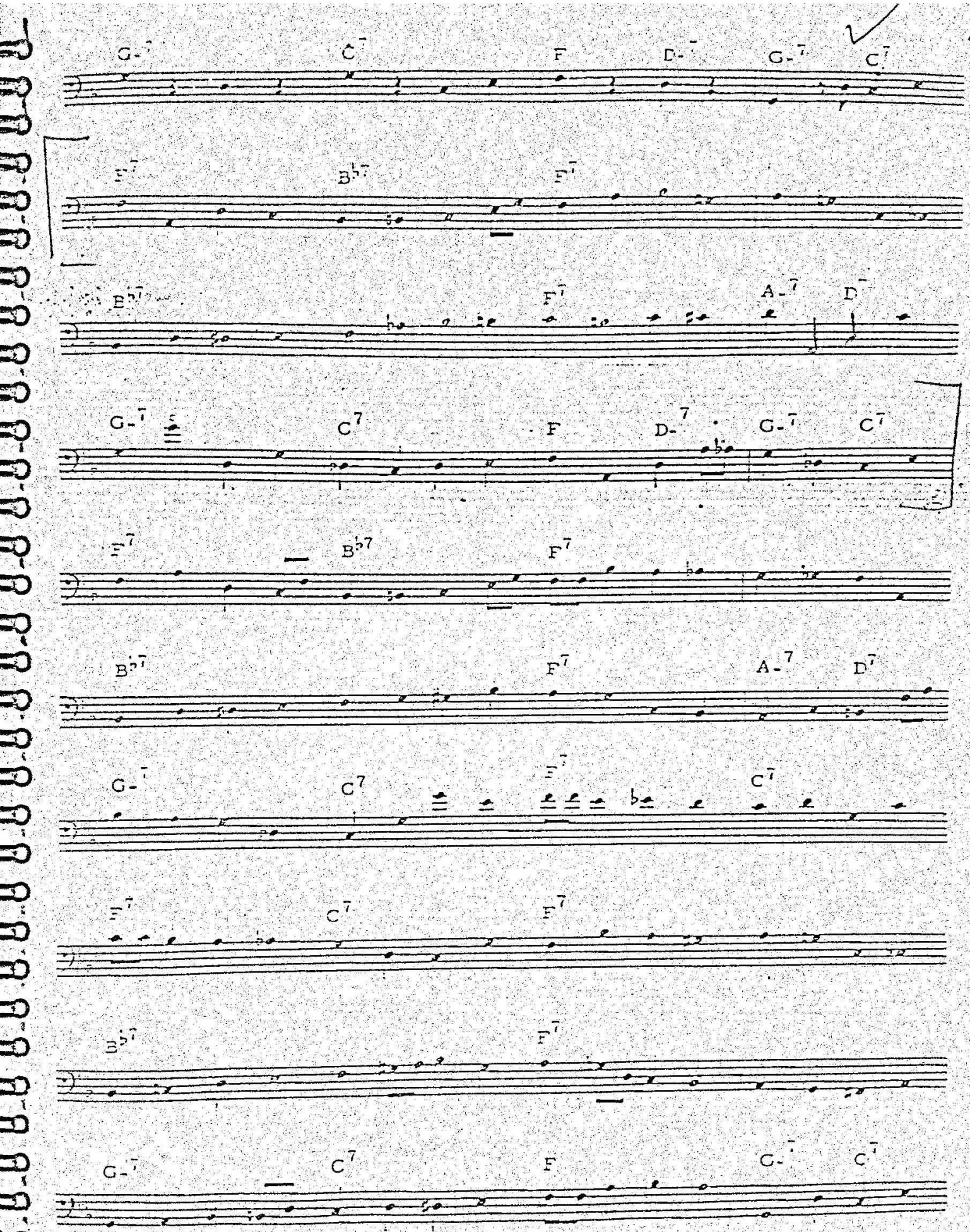
in the style of
PAUL CHAMBERS

"BLUES IN F"

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B♭7 F7 A-7 D7
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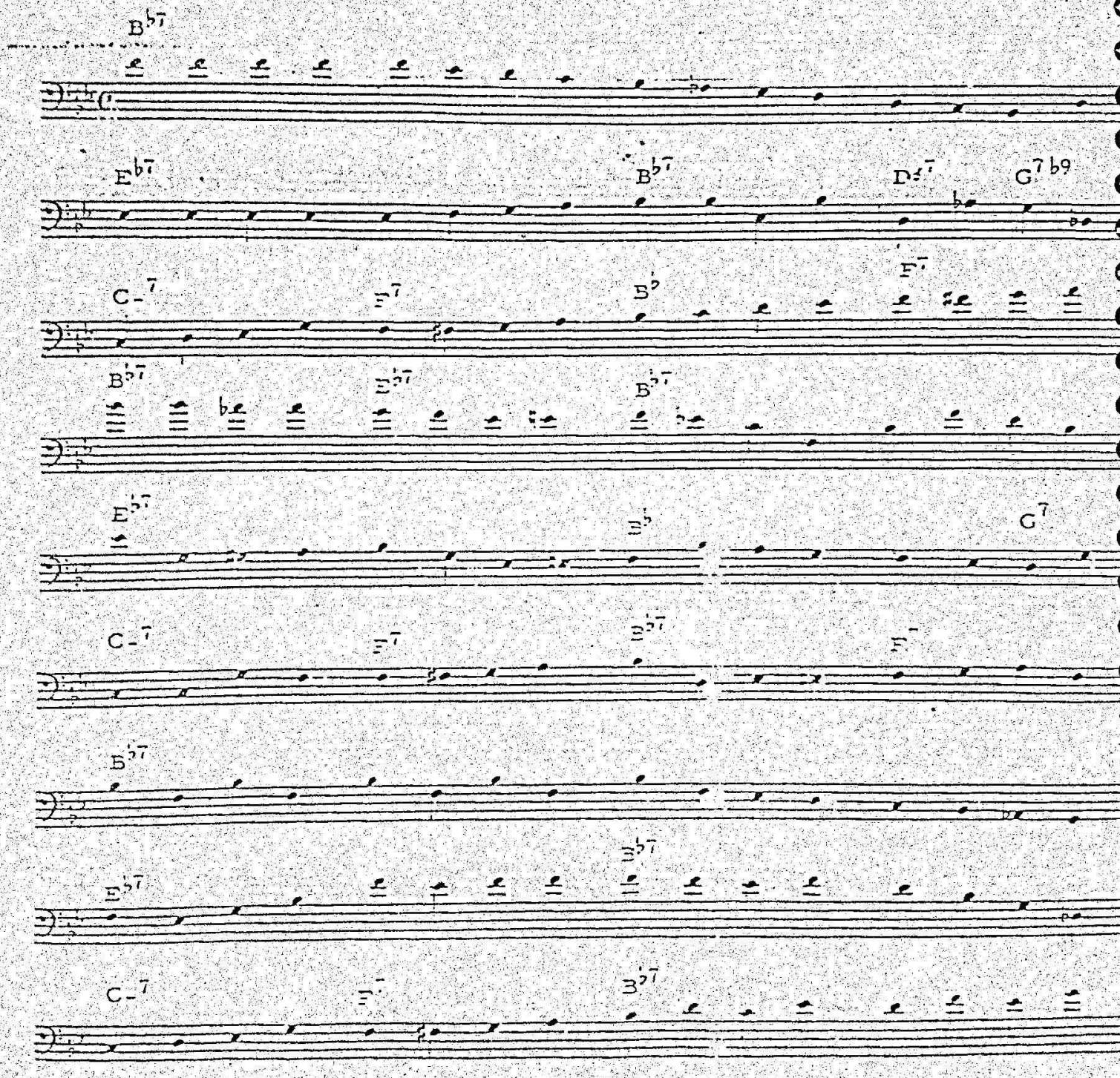
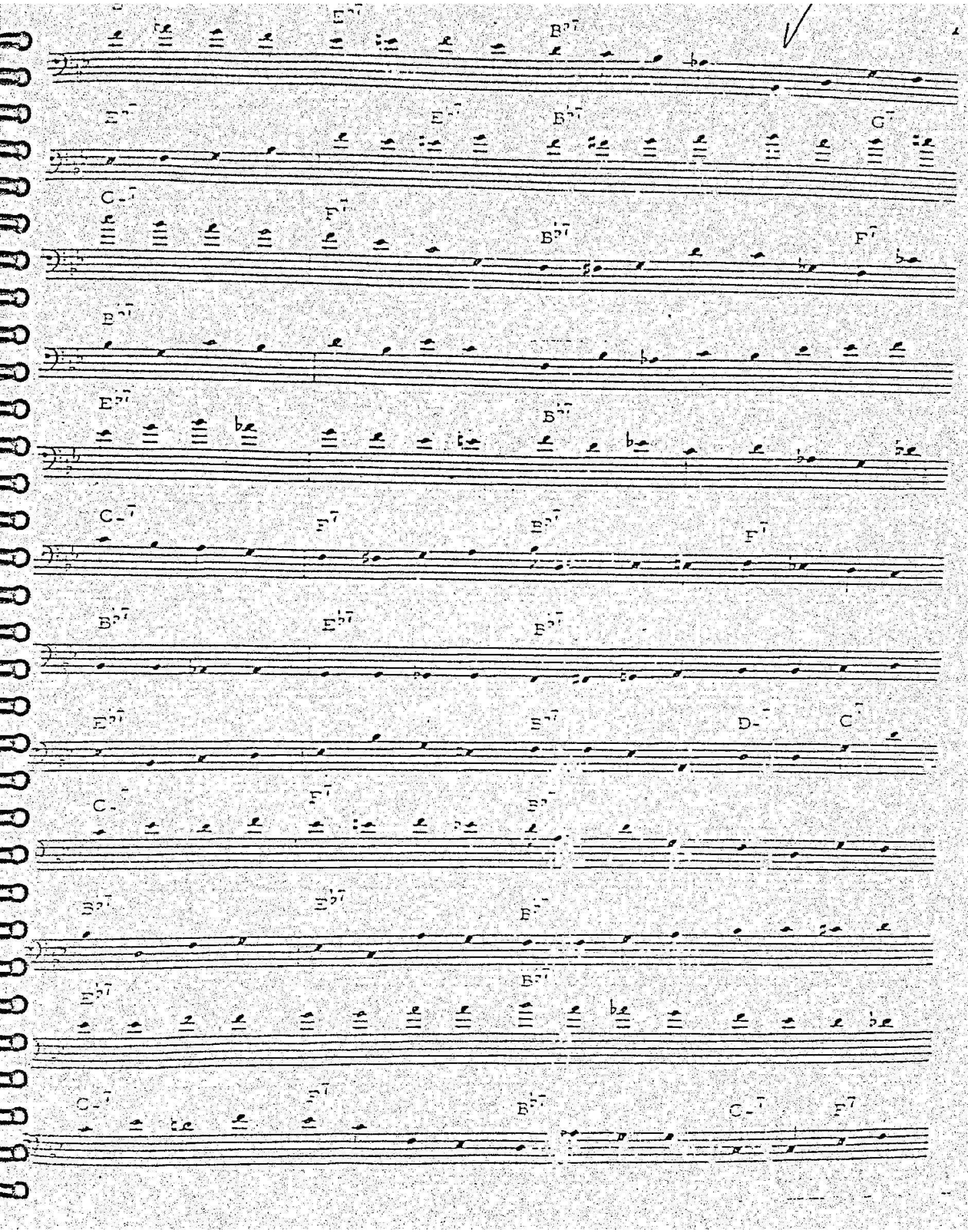
in the style of

RAY BROWN

"BLUES IN B♭"

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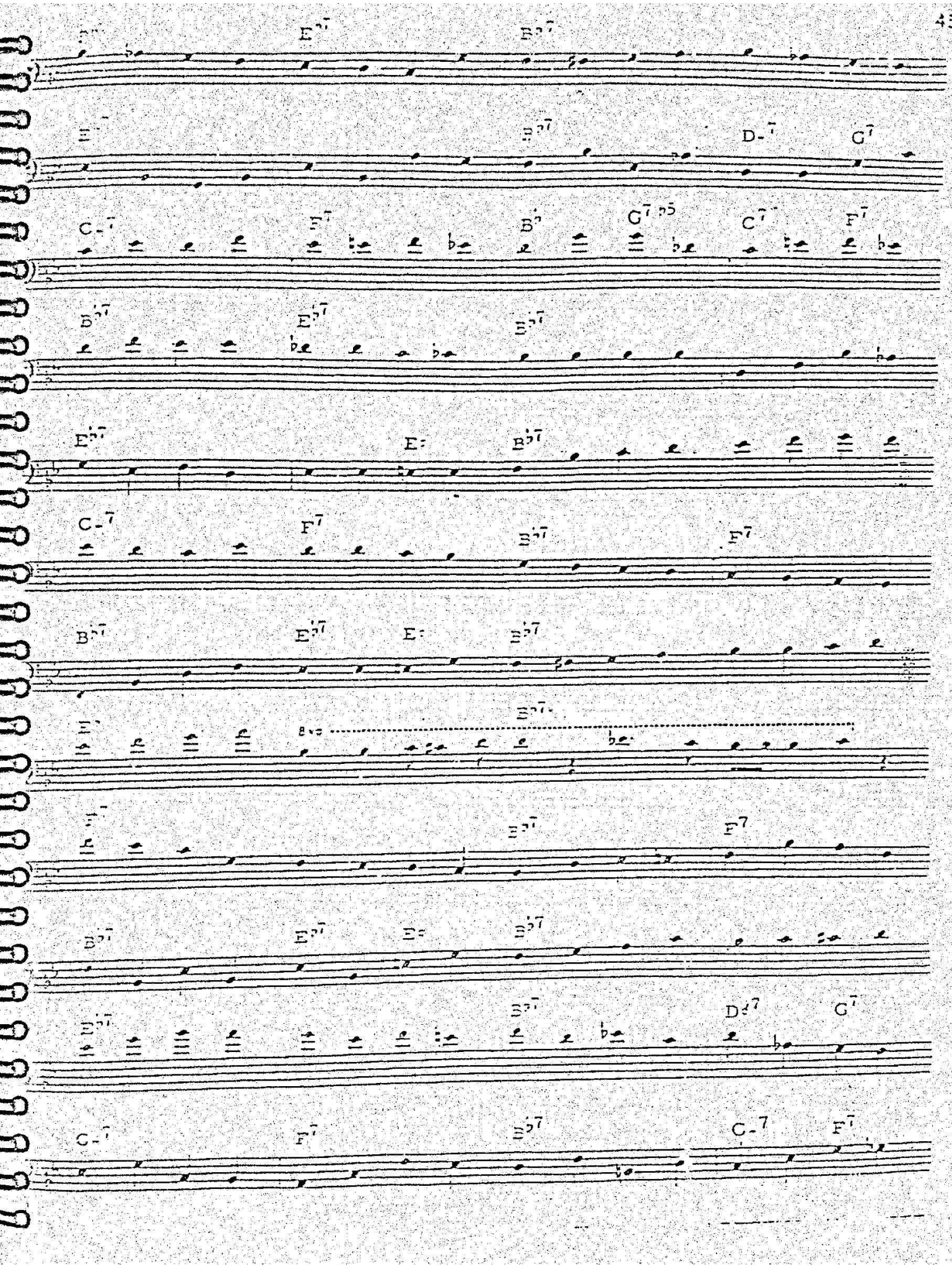
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E♭ 8va B♭7
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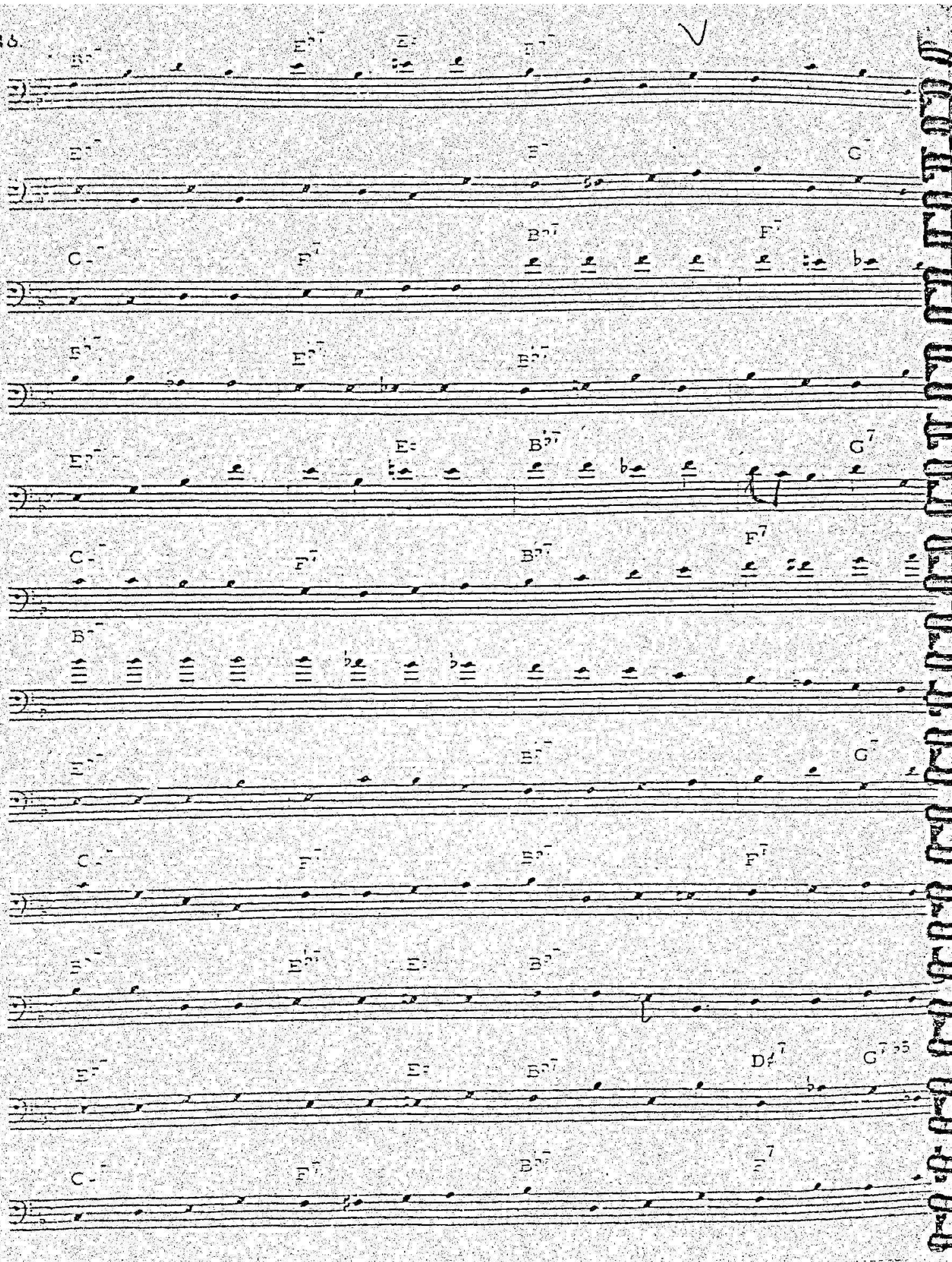
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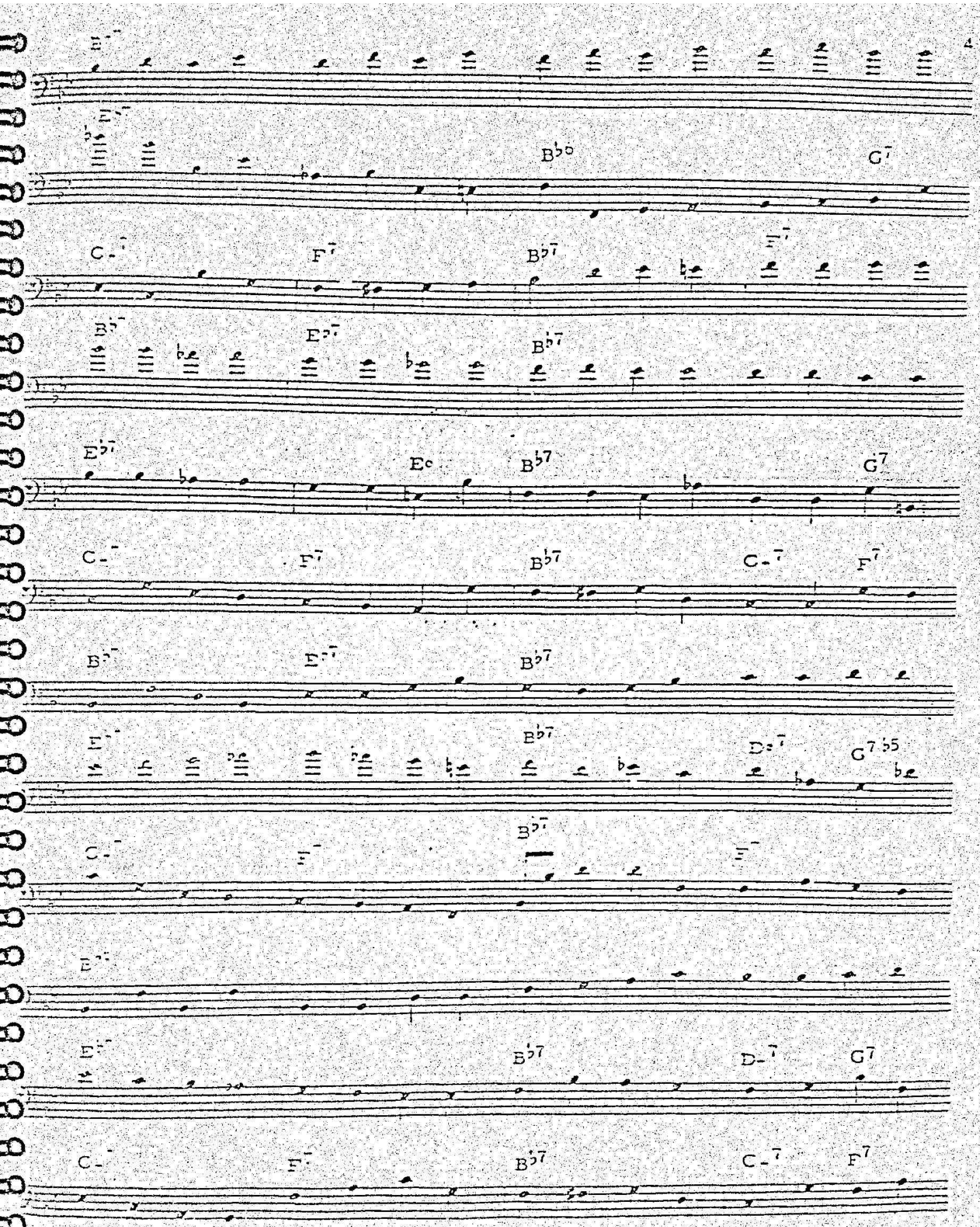
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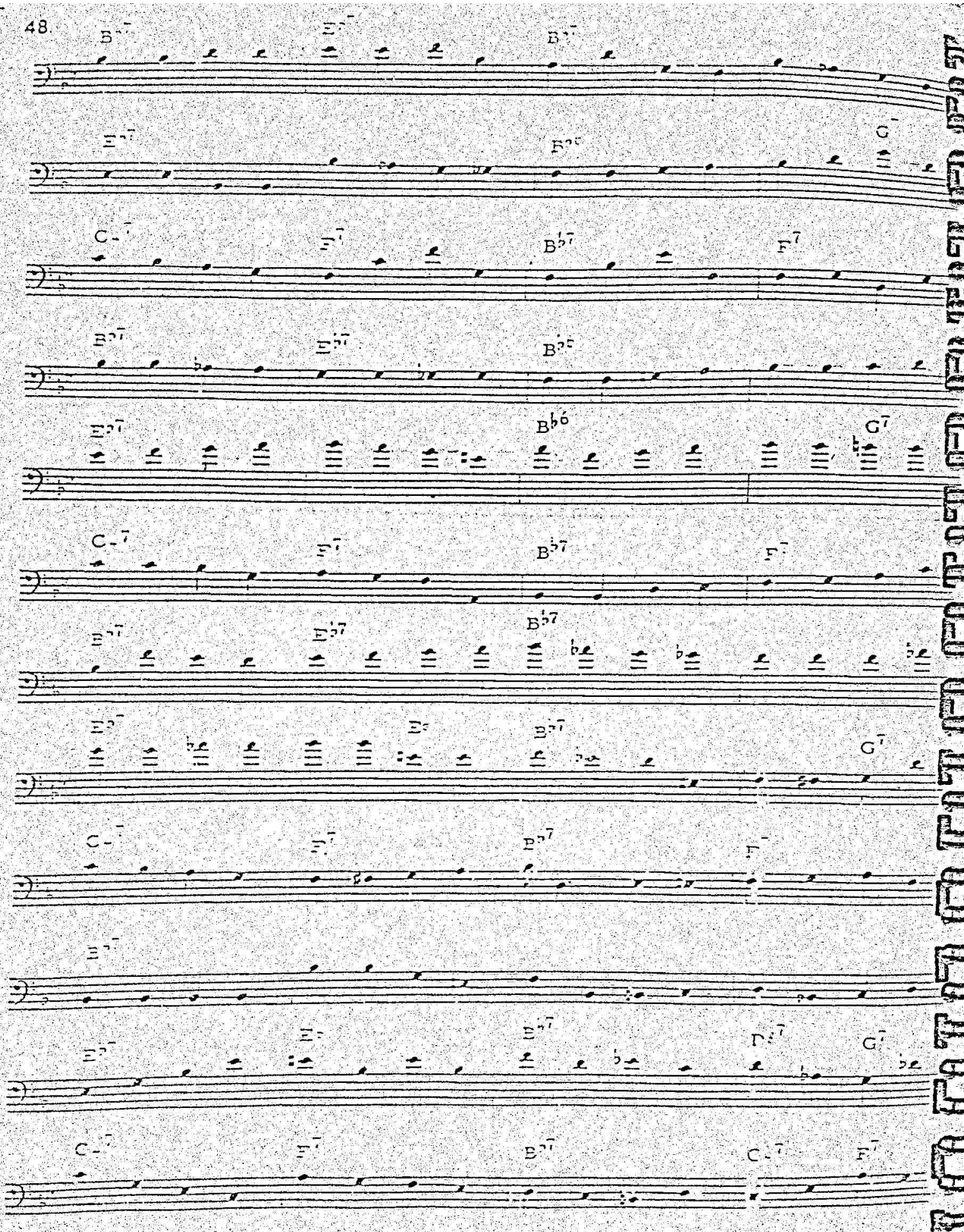
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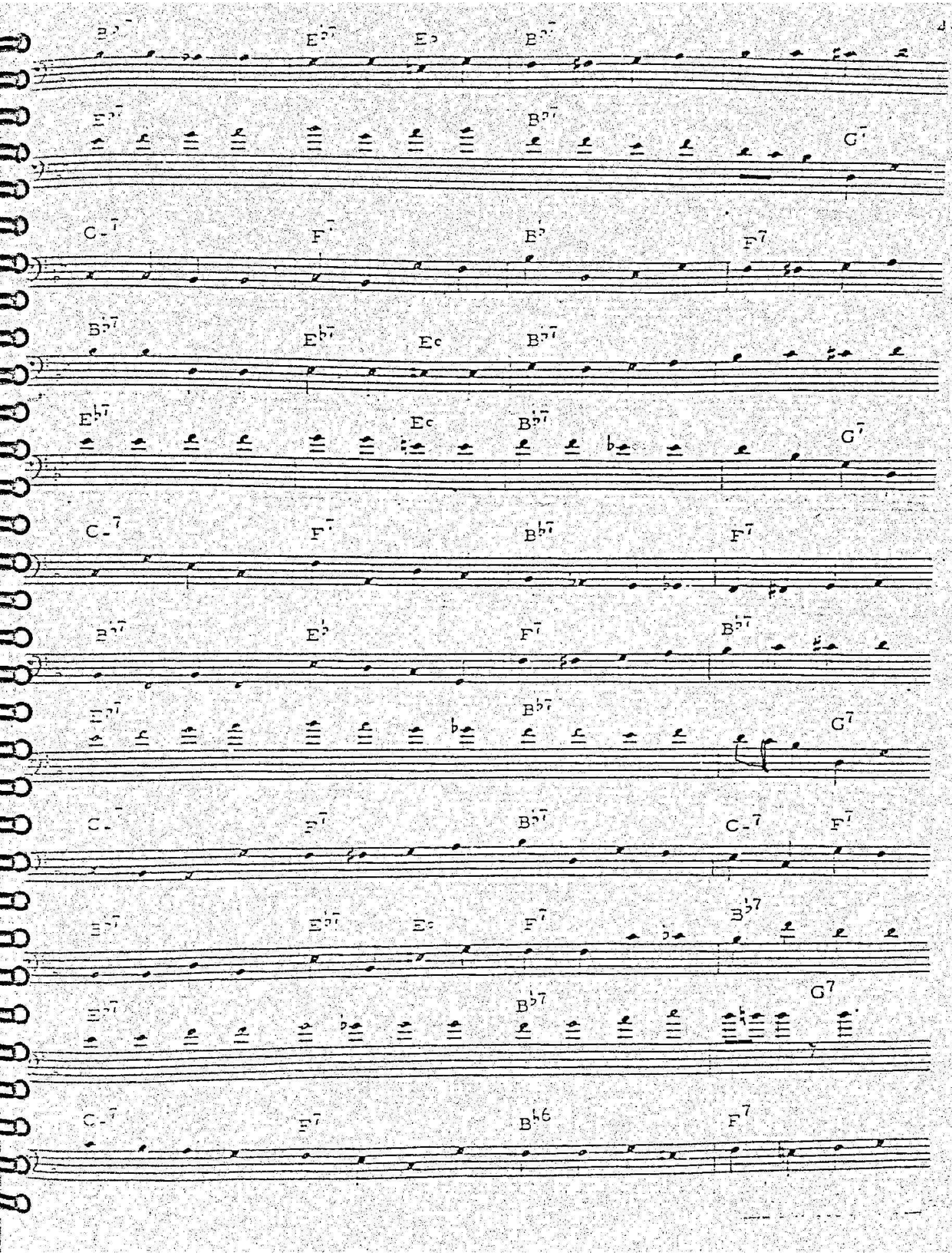
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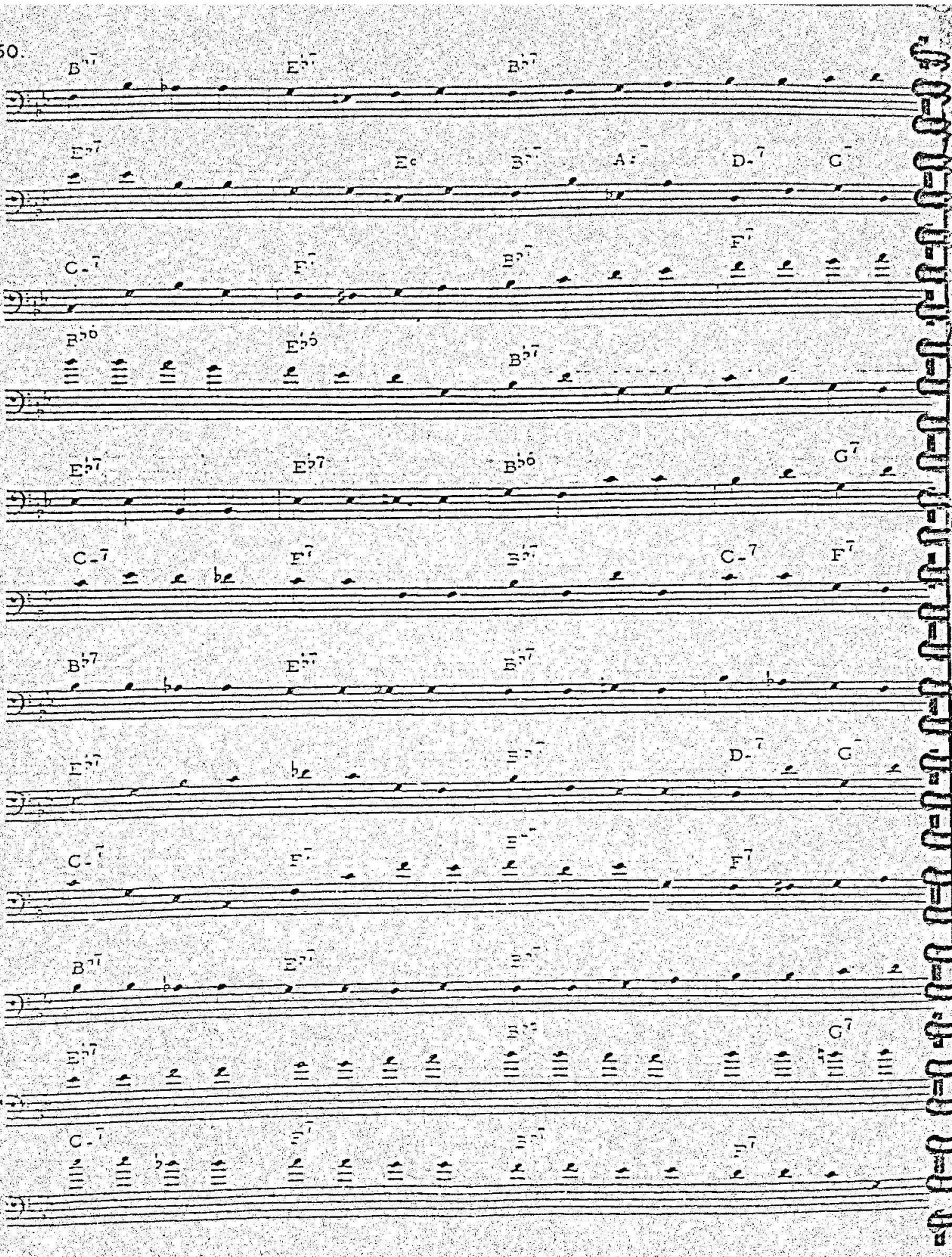
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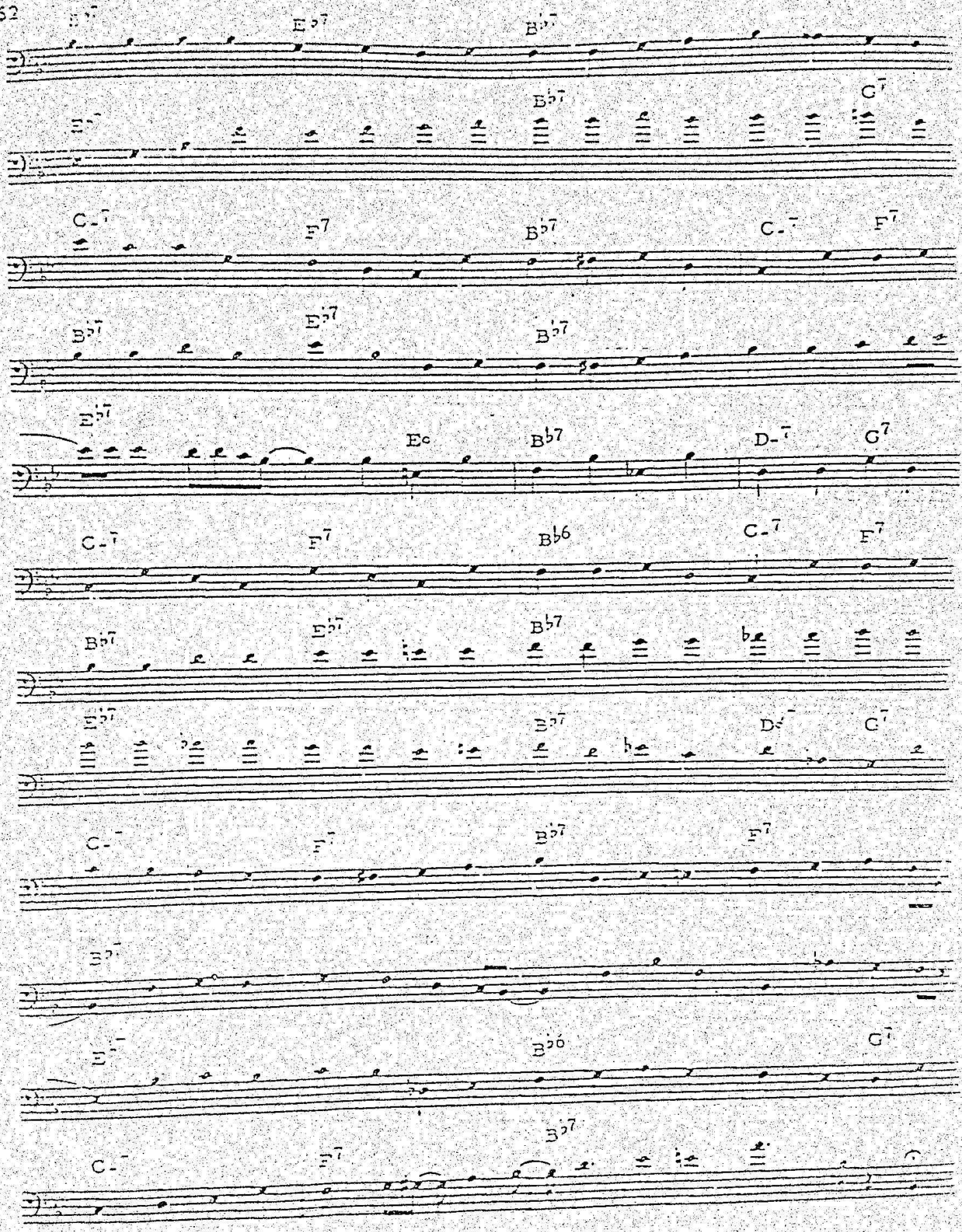
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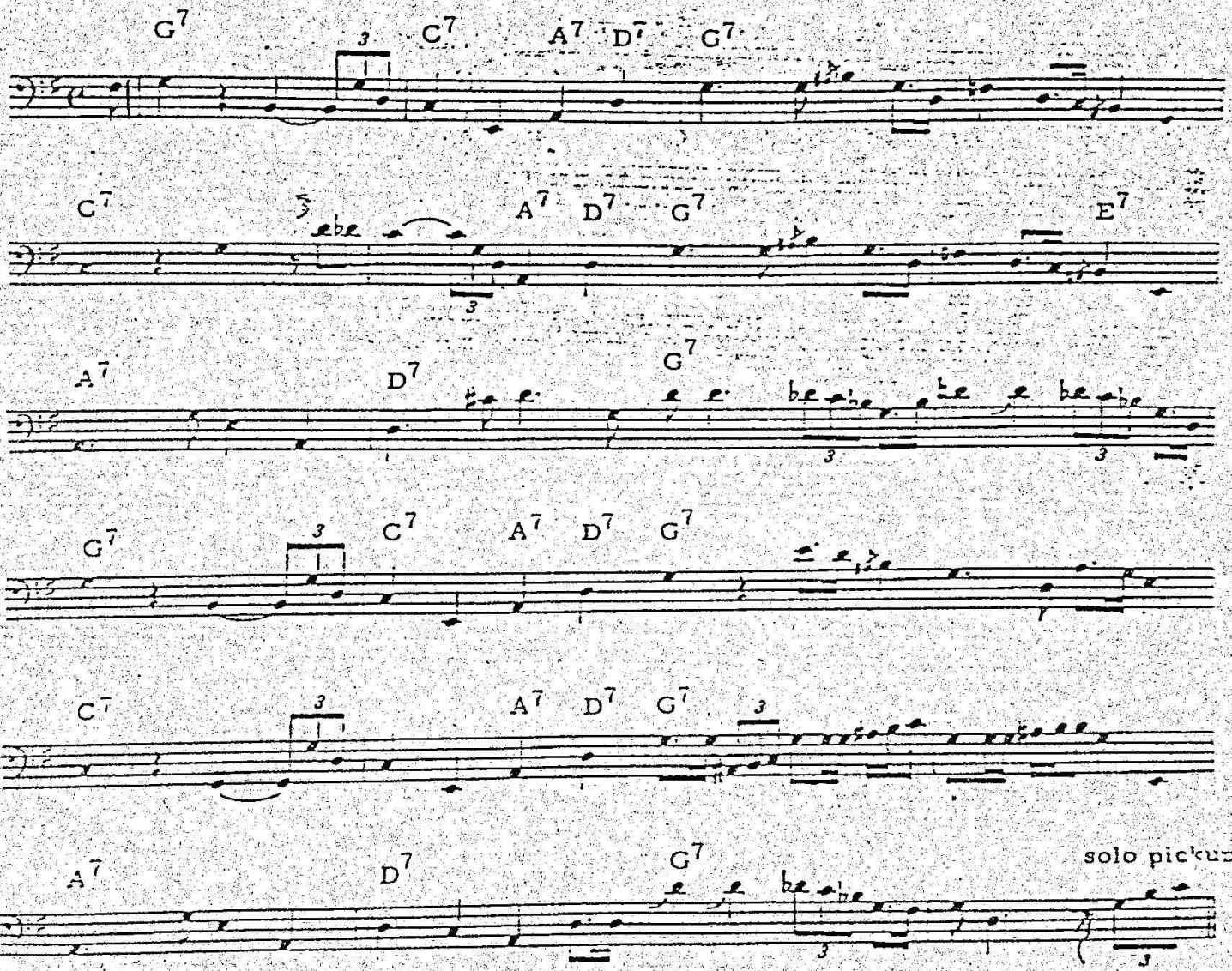
in the style of

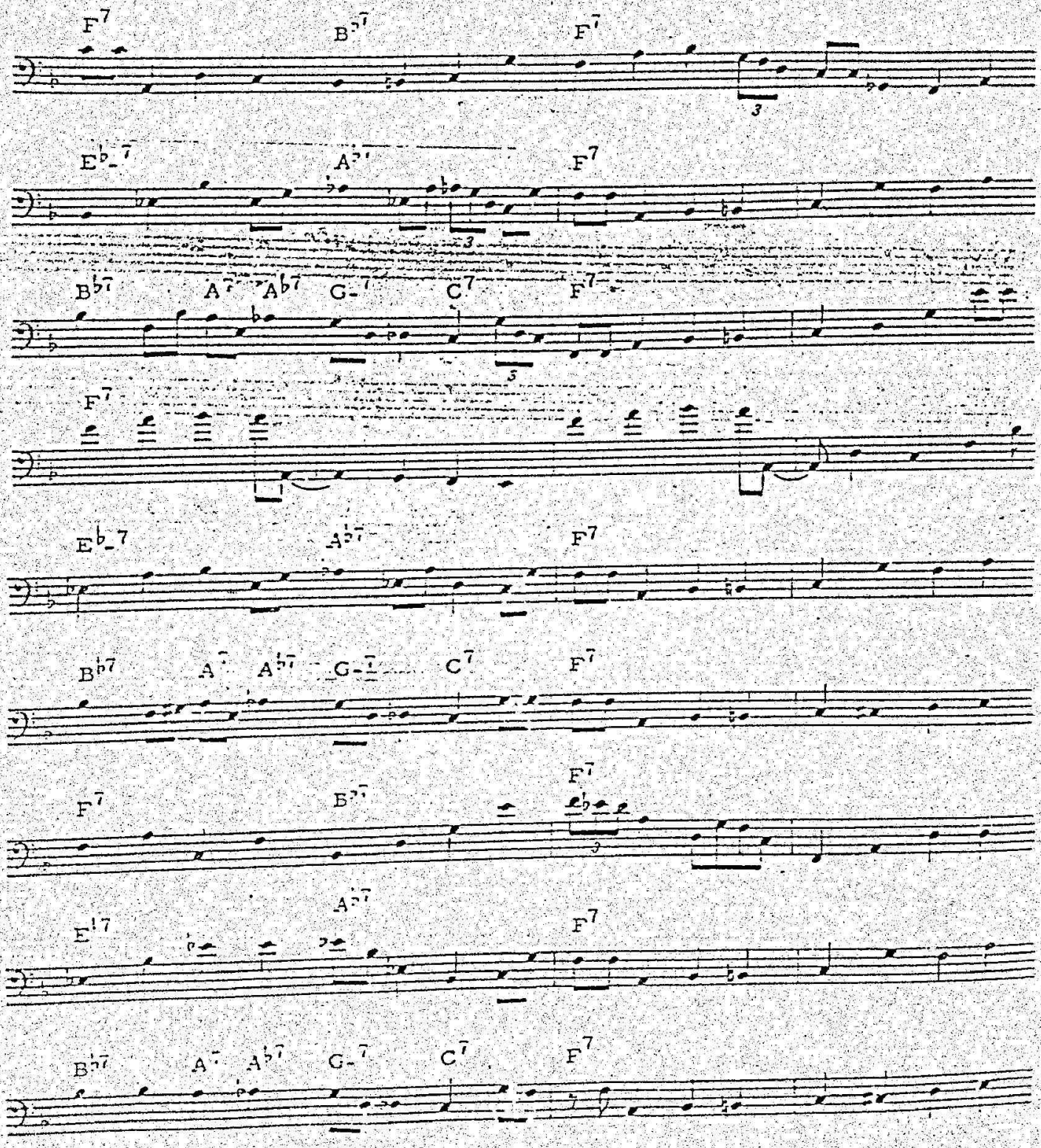
RAY BROWN

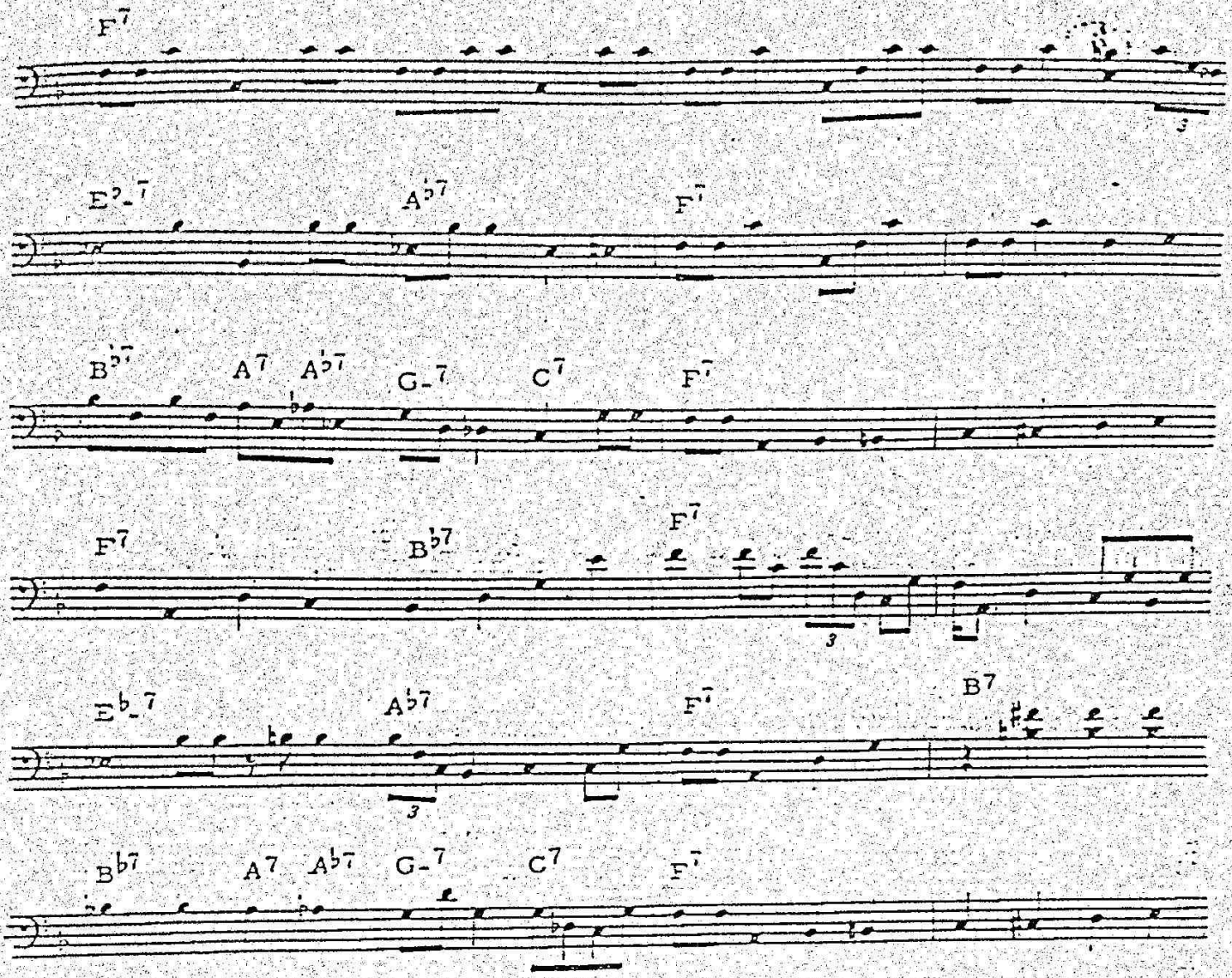
"BLUES IN G"



in the style of
RON CARTER

"ALTERED BLUES CHANGES"

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F7
B7
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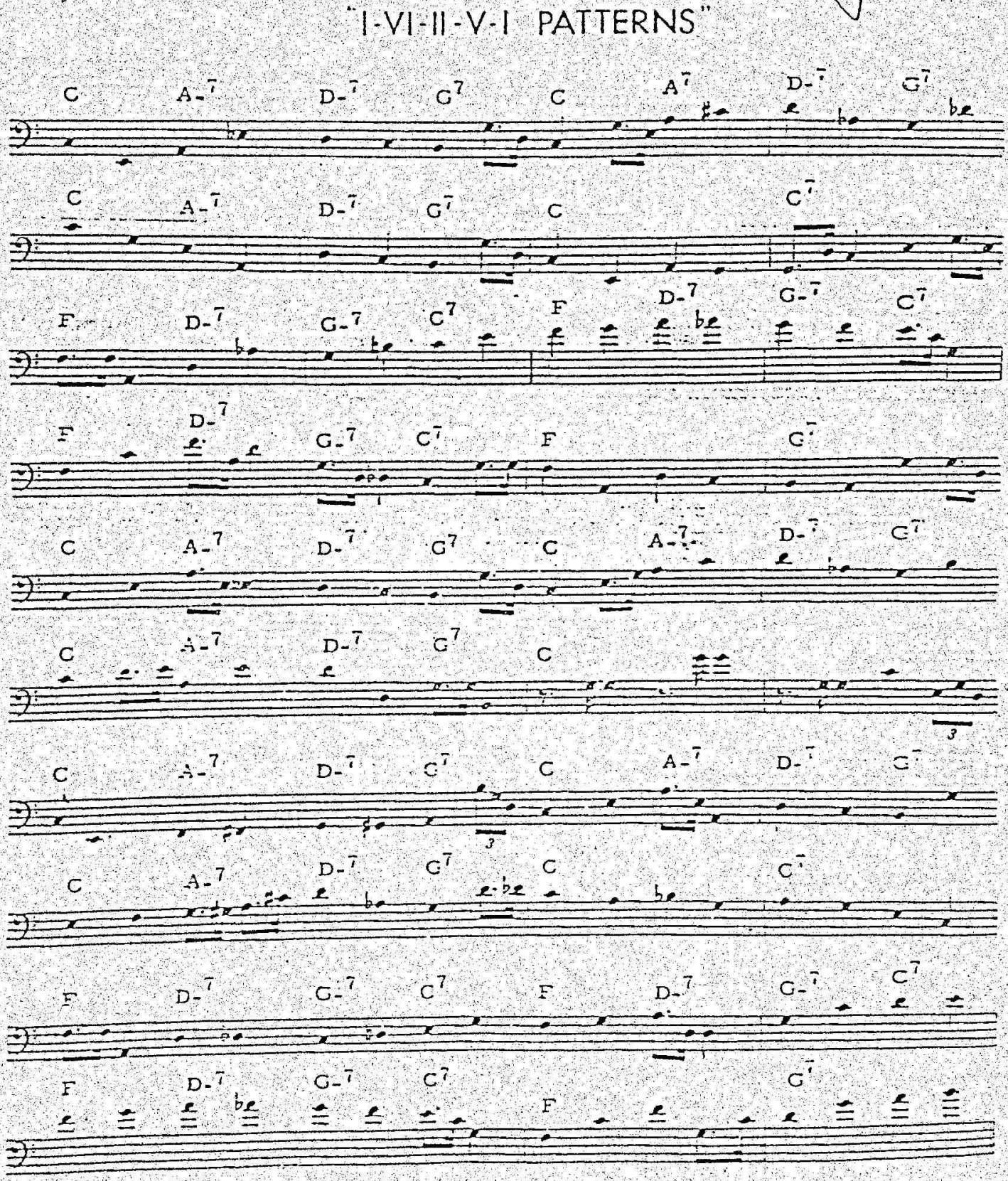
B♭7
A7
A♭7
G-7
C7
F7

in the style of

RAY BROWN

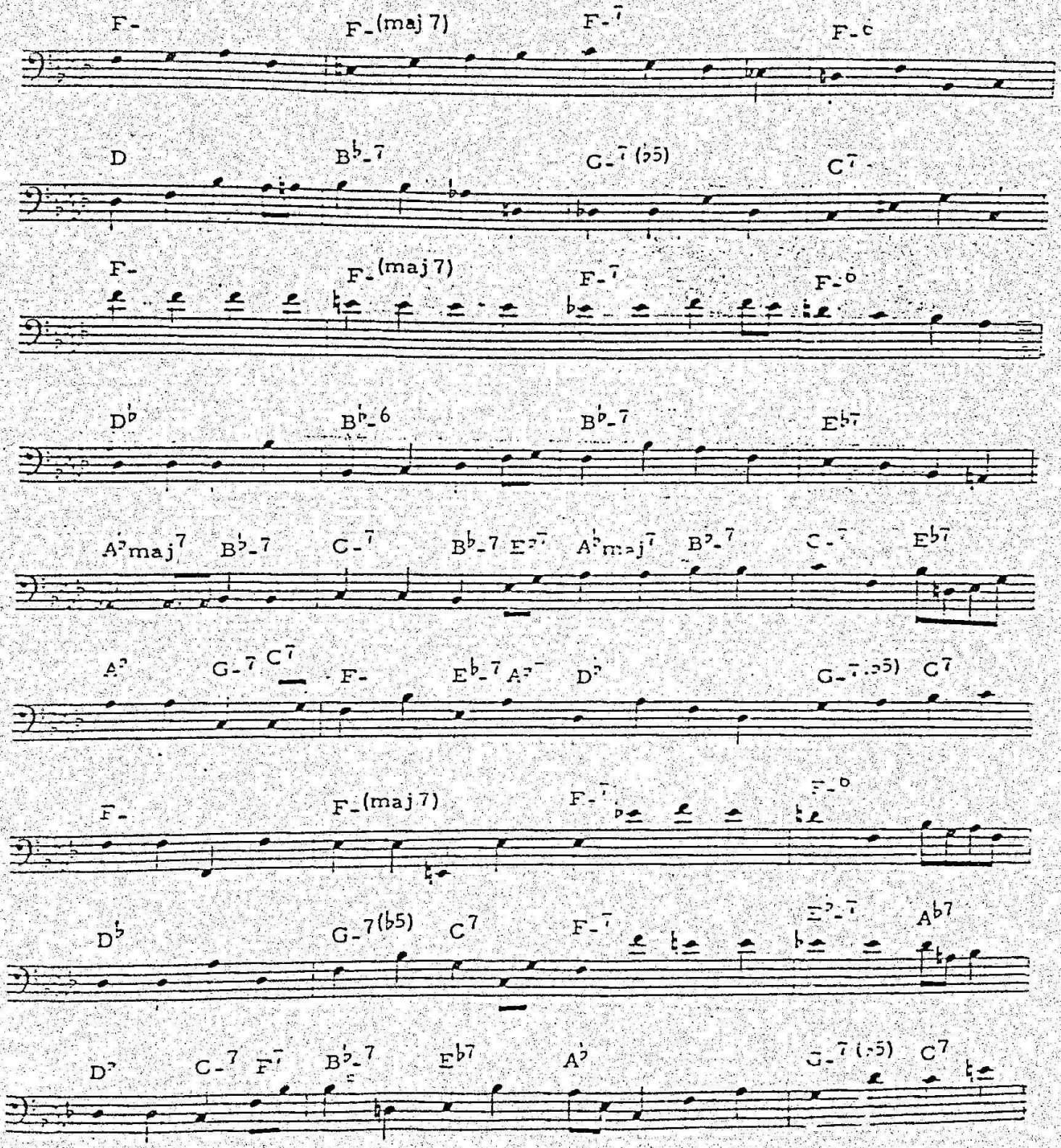
"I-VI-II-V-I PATTERNS"



in the style of

RAY BROWN

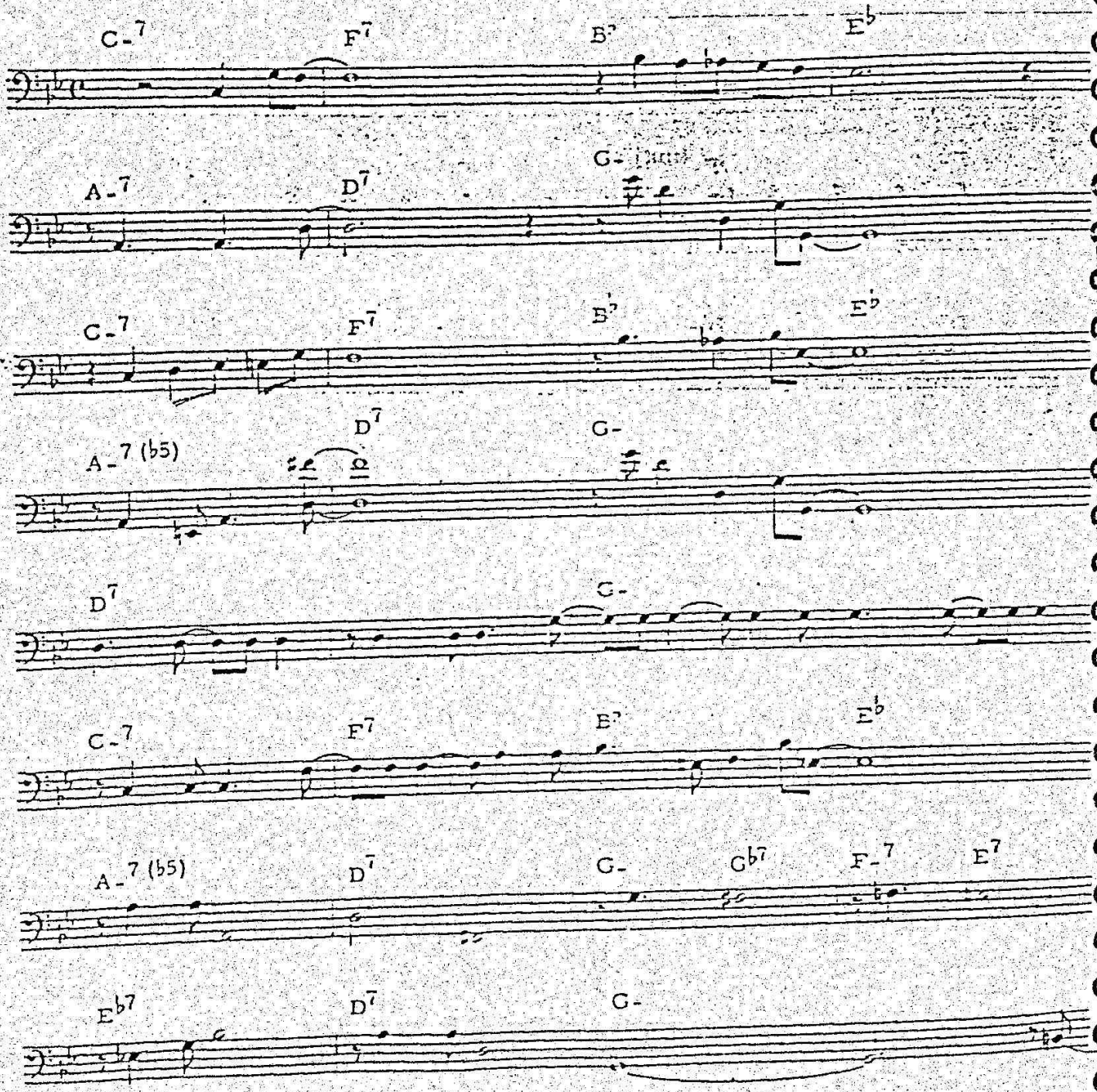
"STANDARD TUNE CHANGES"

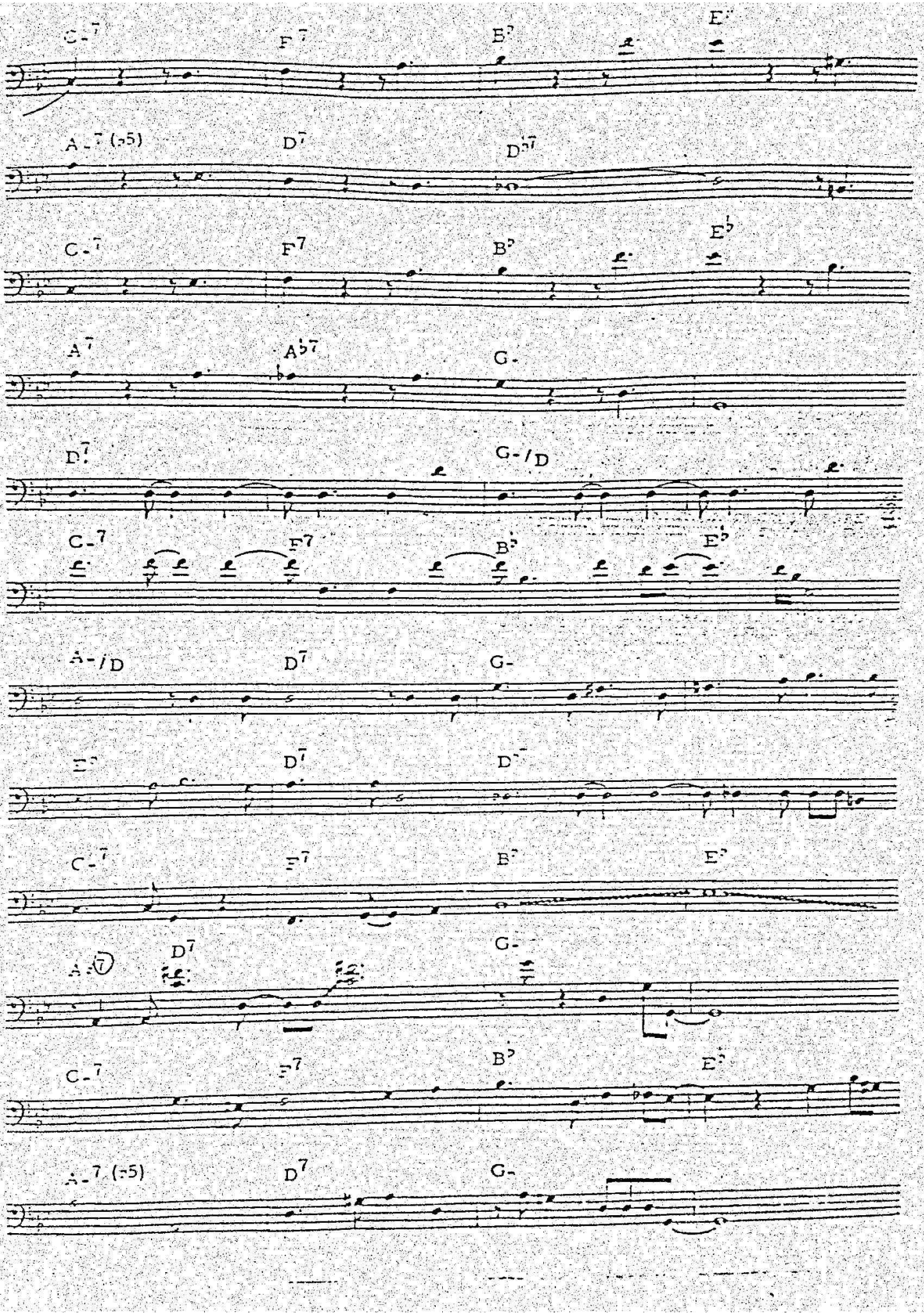


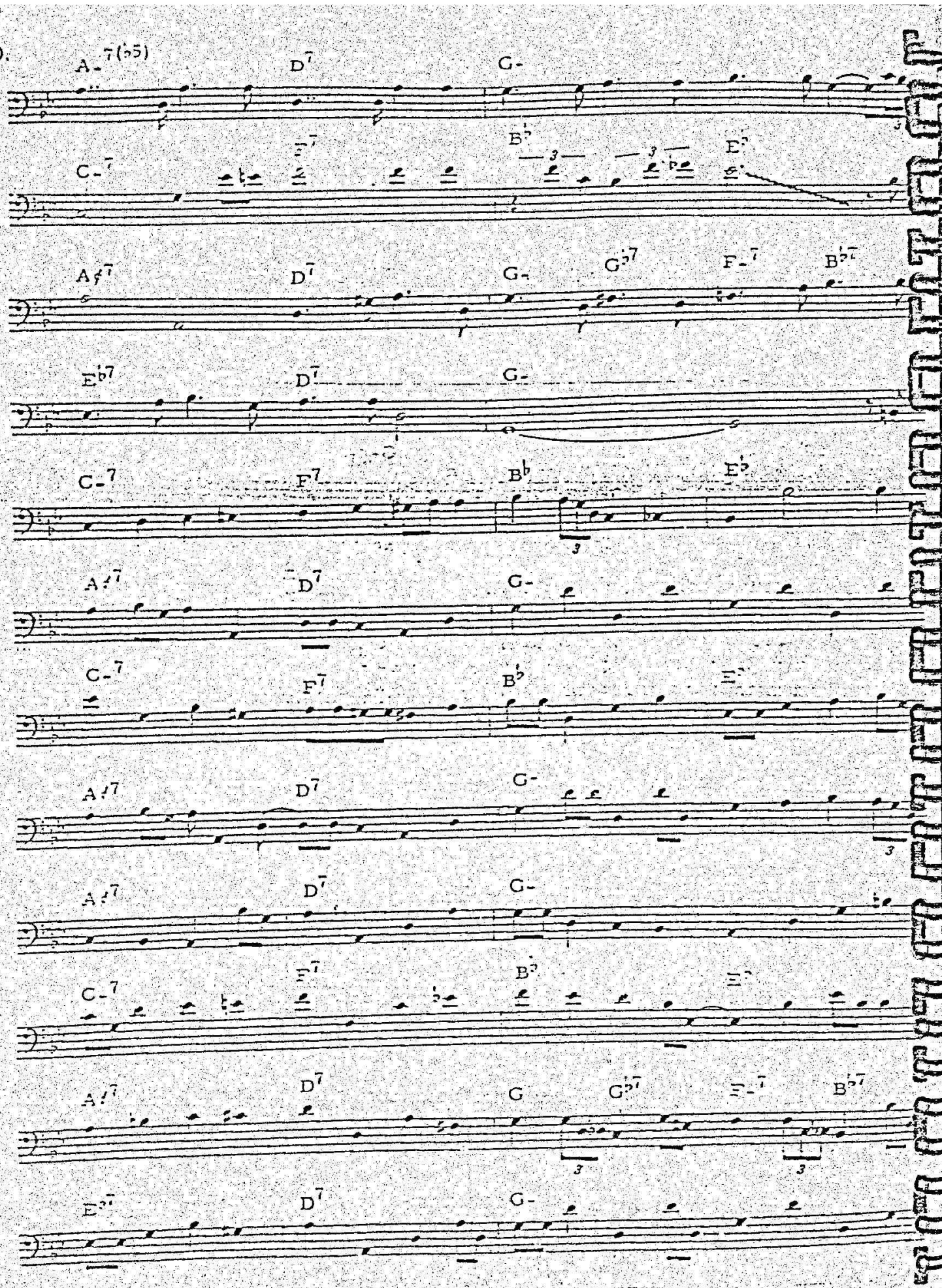
in the style of

RON CARTER

"II-V'S IN MAJOR AND MINOR"



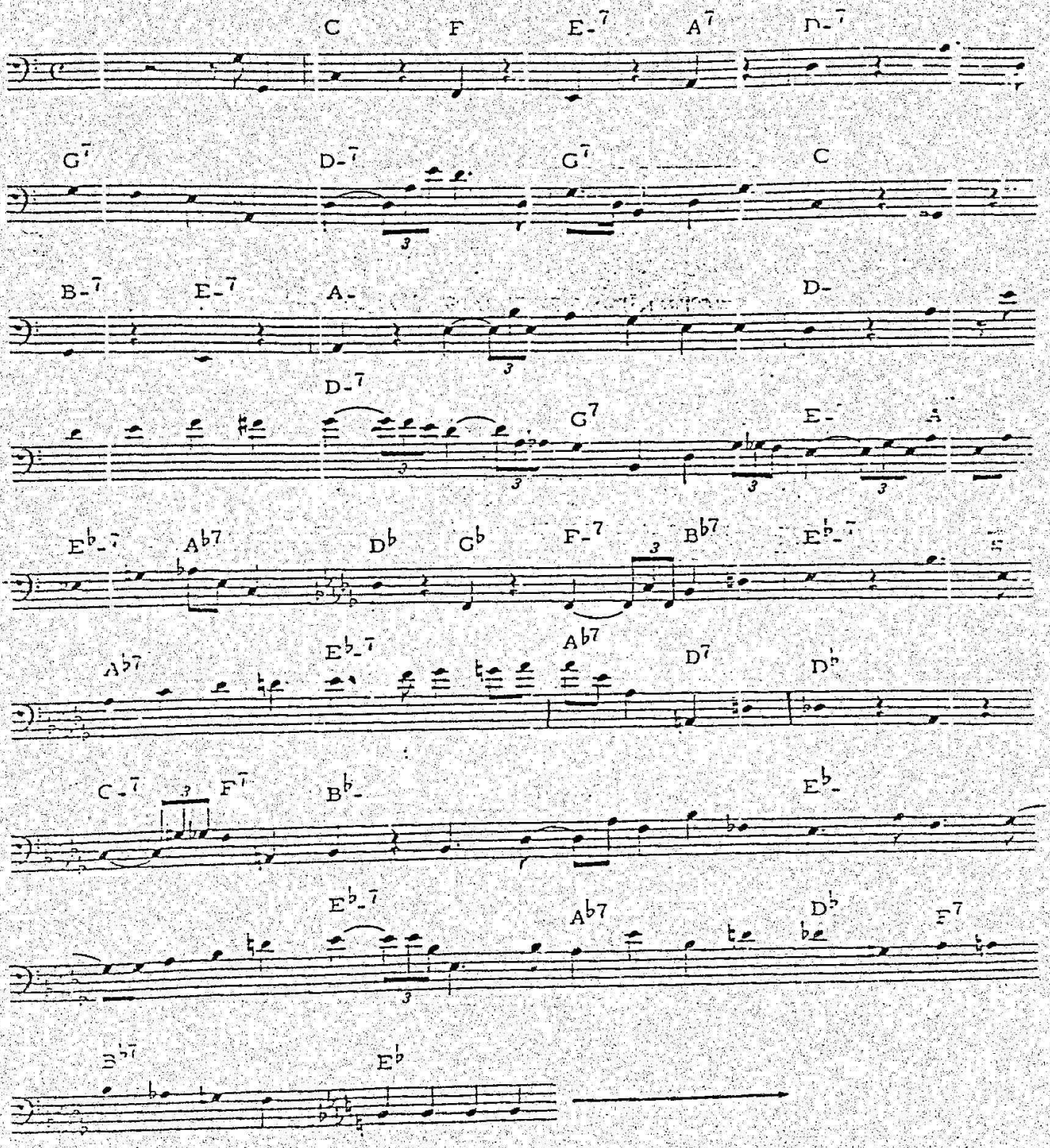

C-7
F7
B♭
E♭
A-7 (♭5)
D7
D♭7
C-7
F7
B♭
E♭
A7
A♭7
G-
D7
G-/D
C-7
F7
B♭
E♭
A-/D
D7
G-
E♭
D7
D♭7
C-7
F7
B♭
E♭
A-⑦
D7
G-
C-7
F7
B♭
E♭
A-7 (♭5)
D7
G-


60.
A-7(♭5)
D7
G-
C-7
F7
B♭
E♭
A♭7
G♭7
F-7
B♭7
E♭7

in the style of

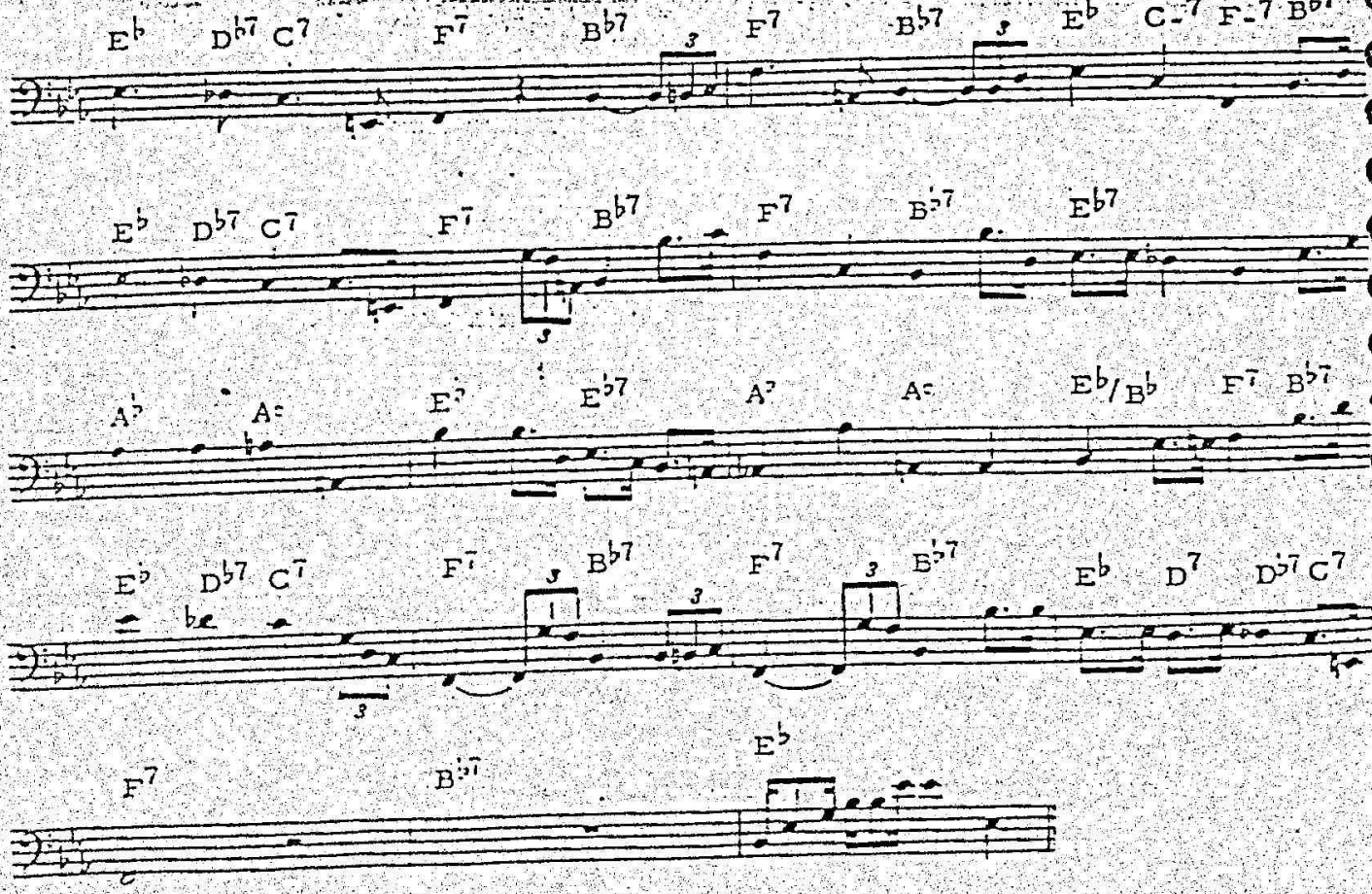
RAY BROWN

"STANDARD TUNE CHANGES"



in the style of
RAY BROWN

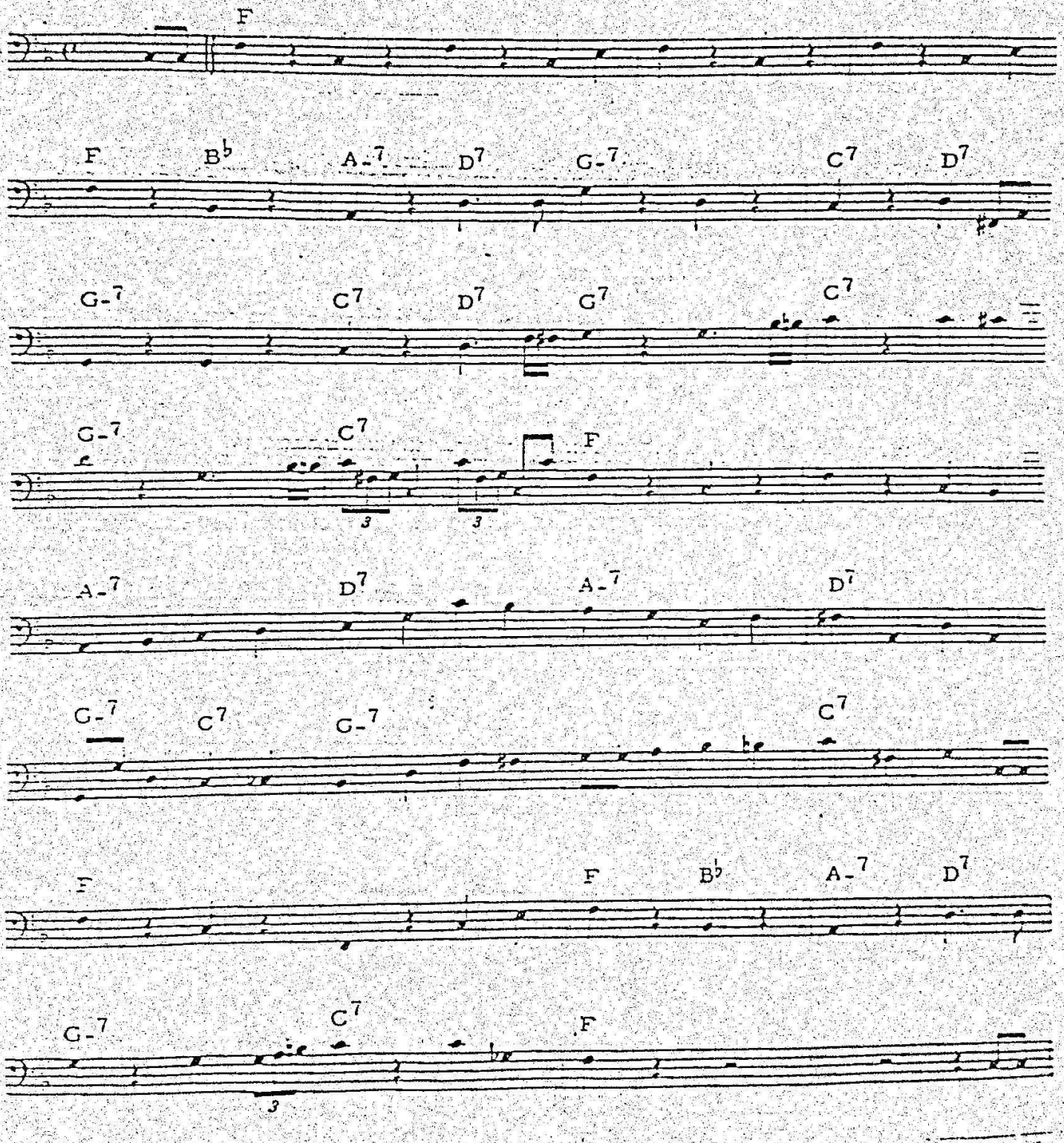
"STANDARD TUNE CHANGES"

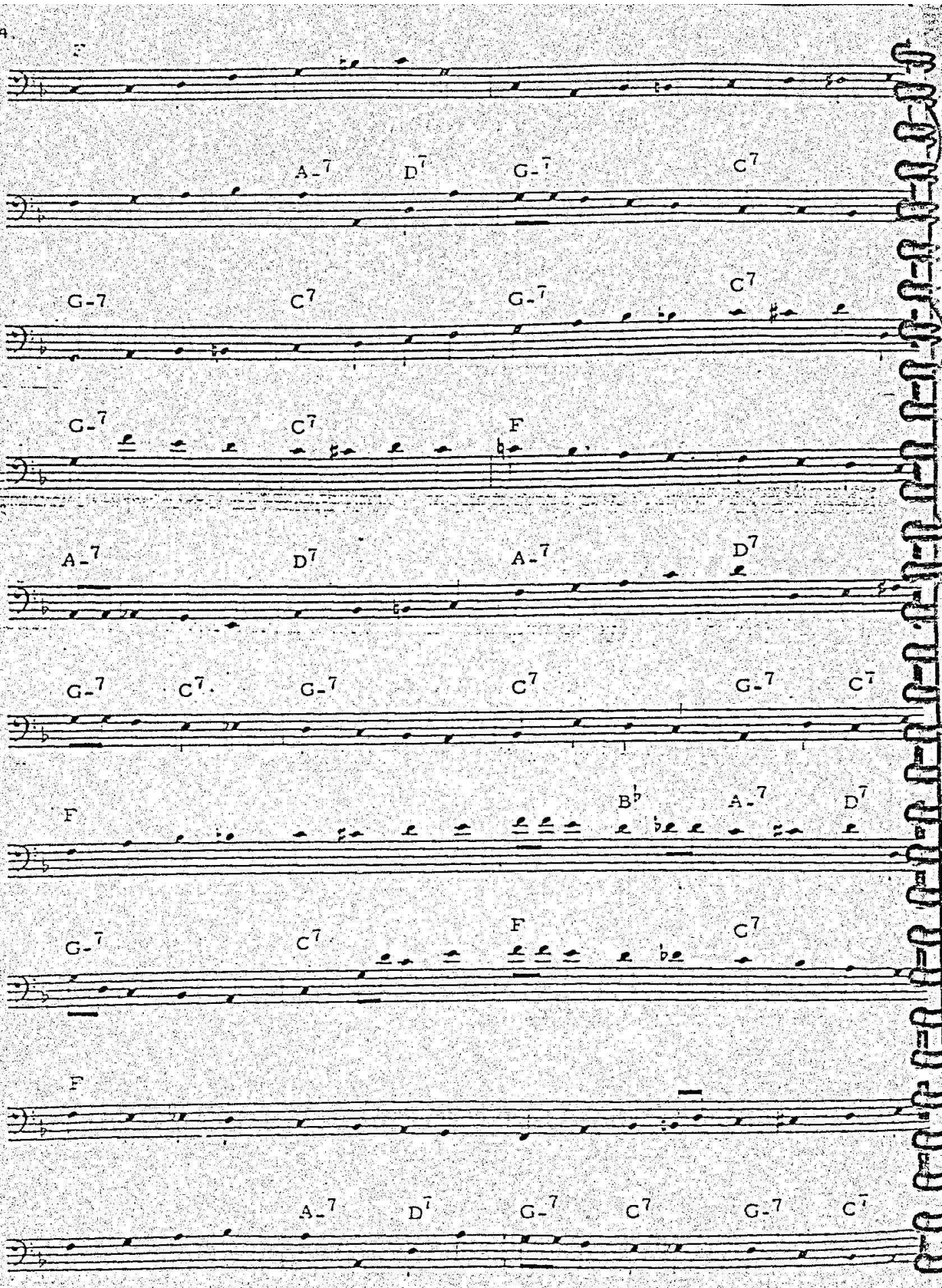


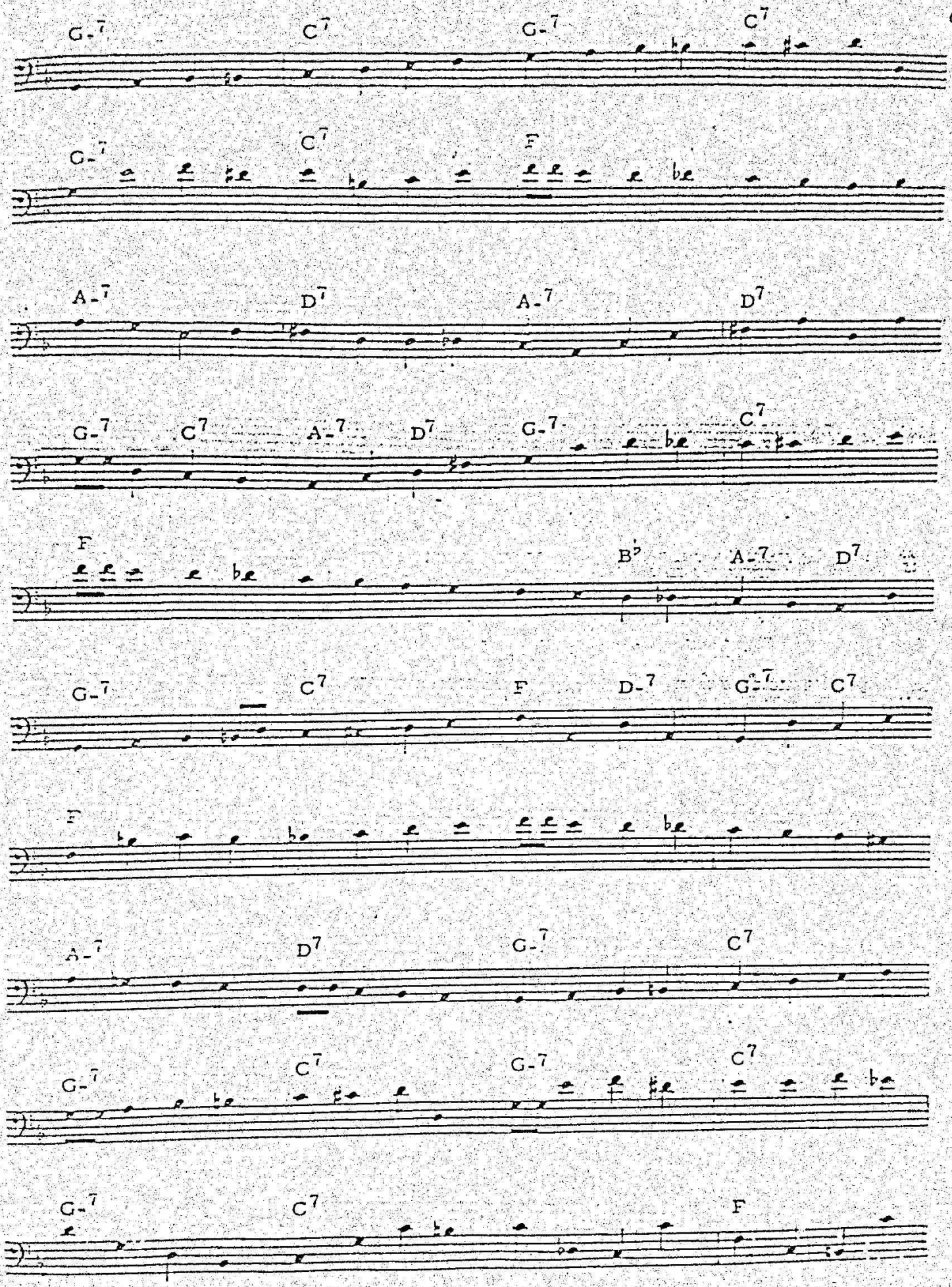
in the style of

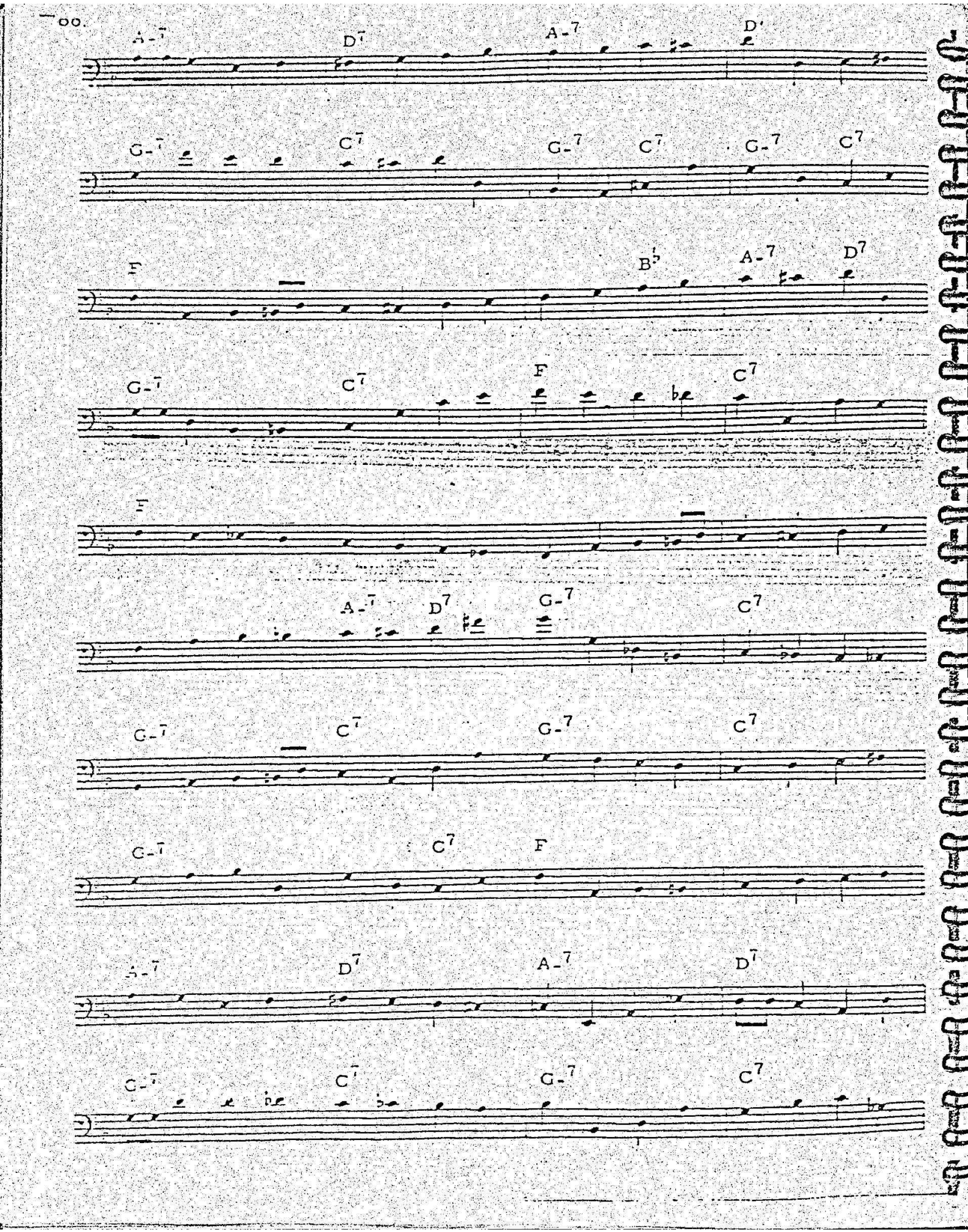
PAUL CHAMBERS

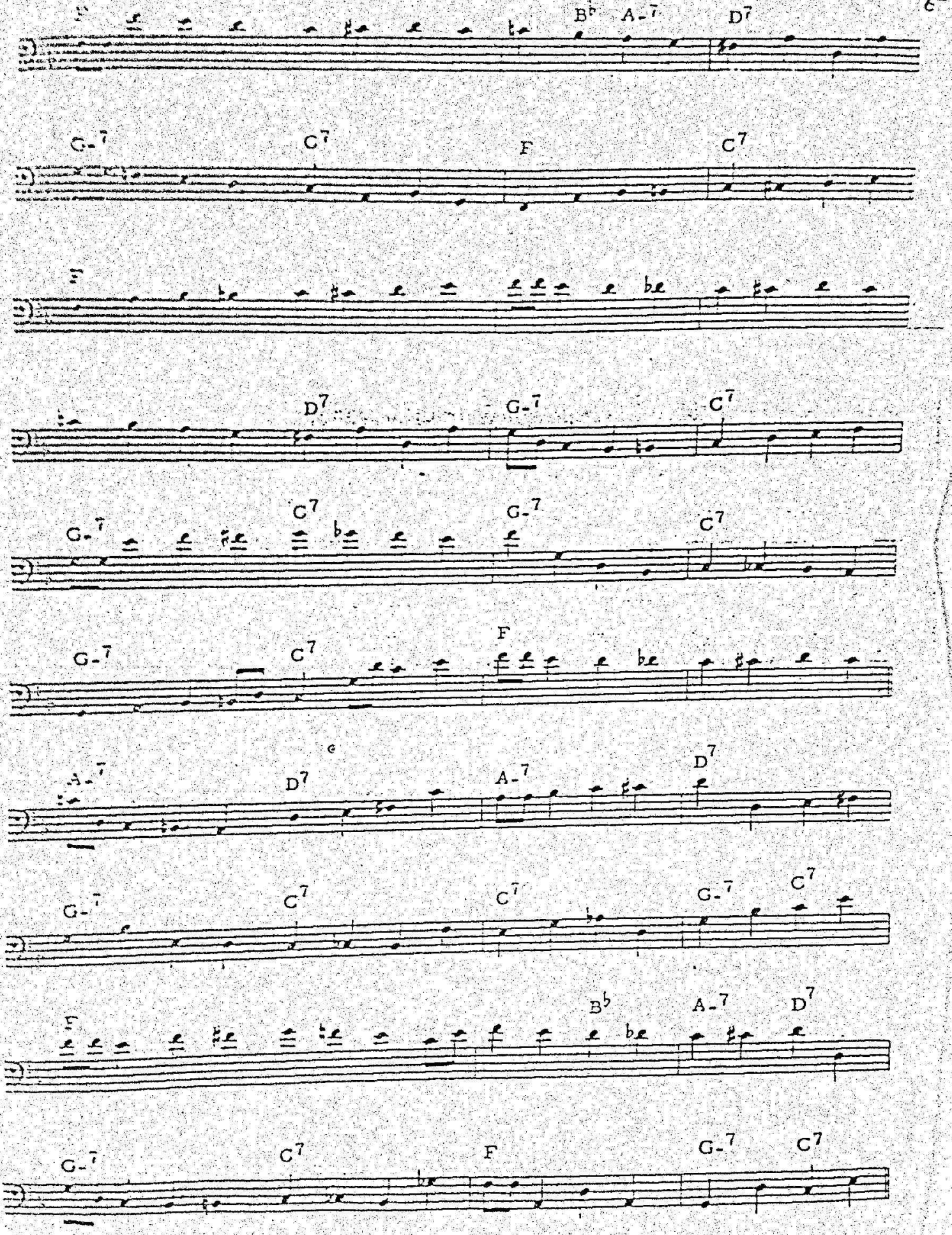
"STANDARD TUNE CHANGES"




F
A-7 D7 G-7 C7
G-7 C7 G-7 C7
G-7 C7 F
A-7 D7 A-7 D7
G-7 C7 G-7 C7 G-7 C7
F B♭ A-7 D7
G-7 C7 F C7
F
A-7 D7 G-7 C7 G-7 C7

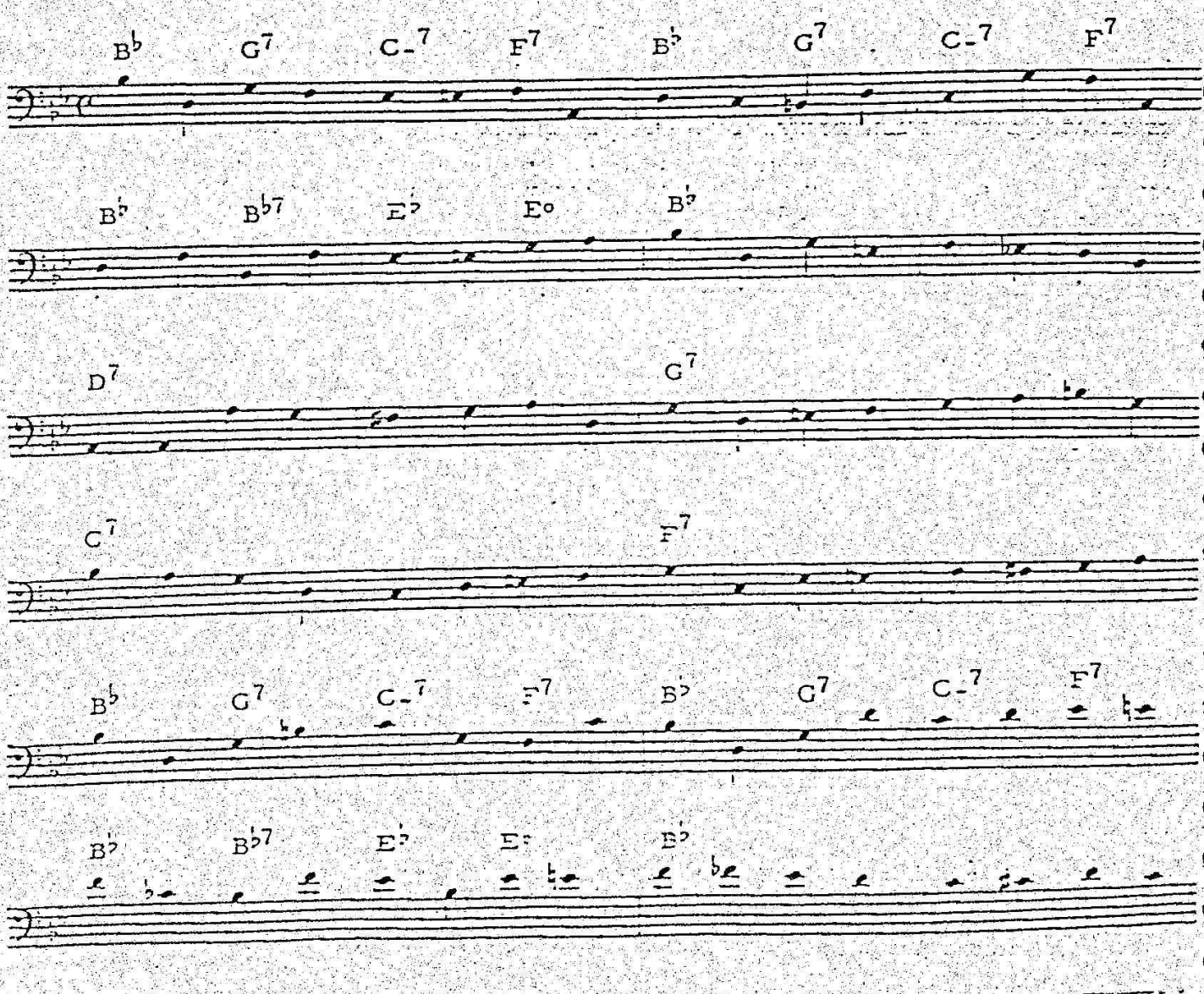

G-7 C7 G-7 C7
G-7 C7 F
A-7 D7 A-7 D7
G-7 C7 A-7 D7 G-7 C7
F B♭ A-7 D7
G-7 C7 F D-7 G-7 C7
F
A-7 D7 G-7 C7
G-7 C7 G-7 C7
G-7 C7 F


A-7 D7 A-7 D7
G-7 C7 G-7 C7 G-7 C7
F B♭ A-7 D7
G-7 C7 F C7
F
A-7 D7 G-7 C7
G-7 C7 G-7 C7
G-7 C7 F
A-7 D7 A-7 D7
G-7 C7 G-7 C7


B♭ A-7 D7
G-7 C7 F C7
F
D7 G-7 C7
G-7 C7 G-7 C7
G-7 C7 F
A-7 D7 A-7 D7
G-7 C7 C7 G-7 C7
F B♭ A-7 D7
G-7 C7 F G-7 C7

in the style of
PAUL CHAMBERS

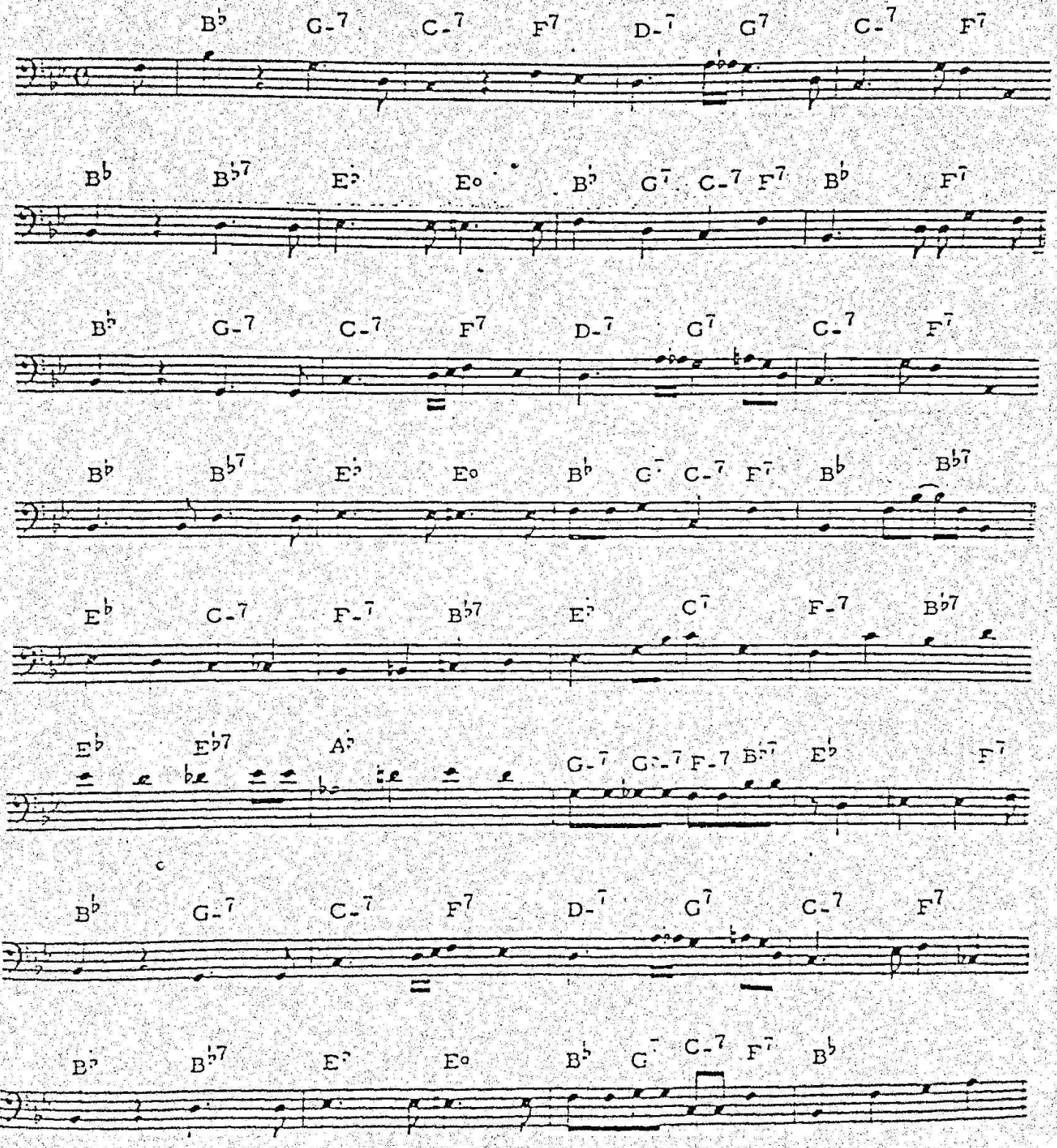
"RHYTHM CHANGES"

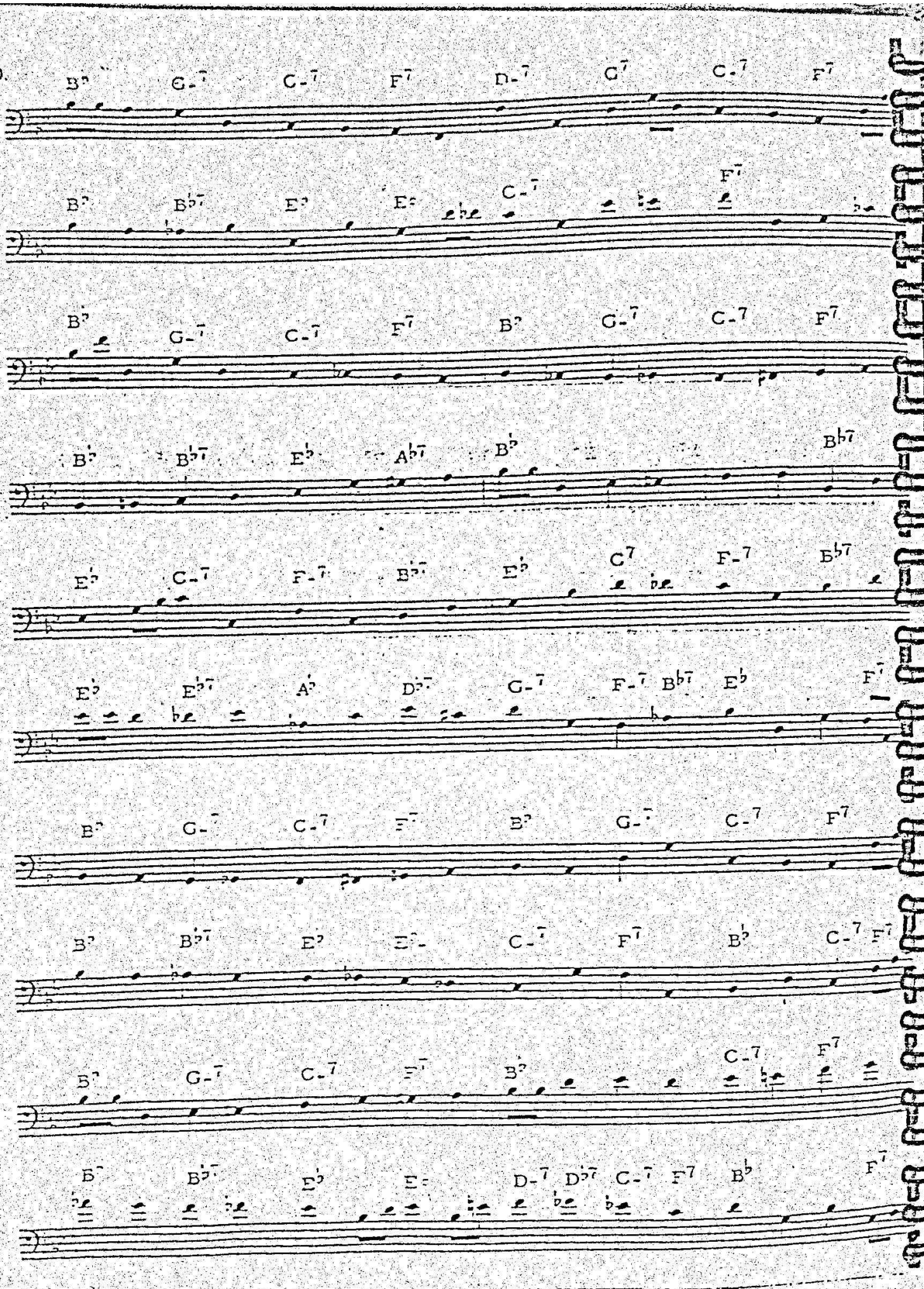


in the style of

PAUL CHAMBERS

"RHYTHM CHANGES"

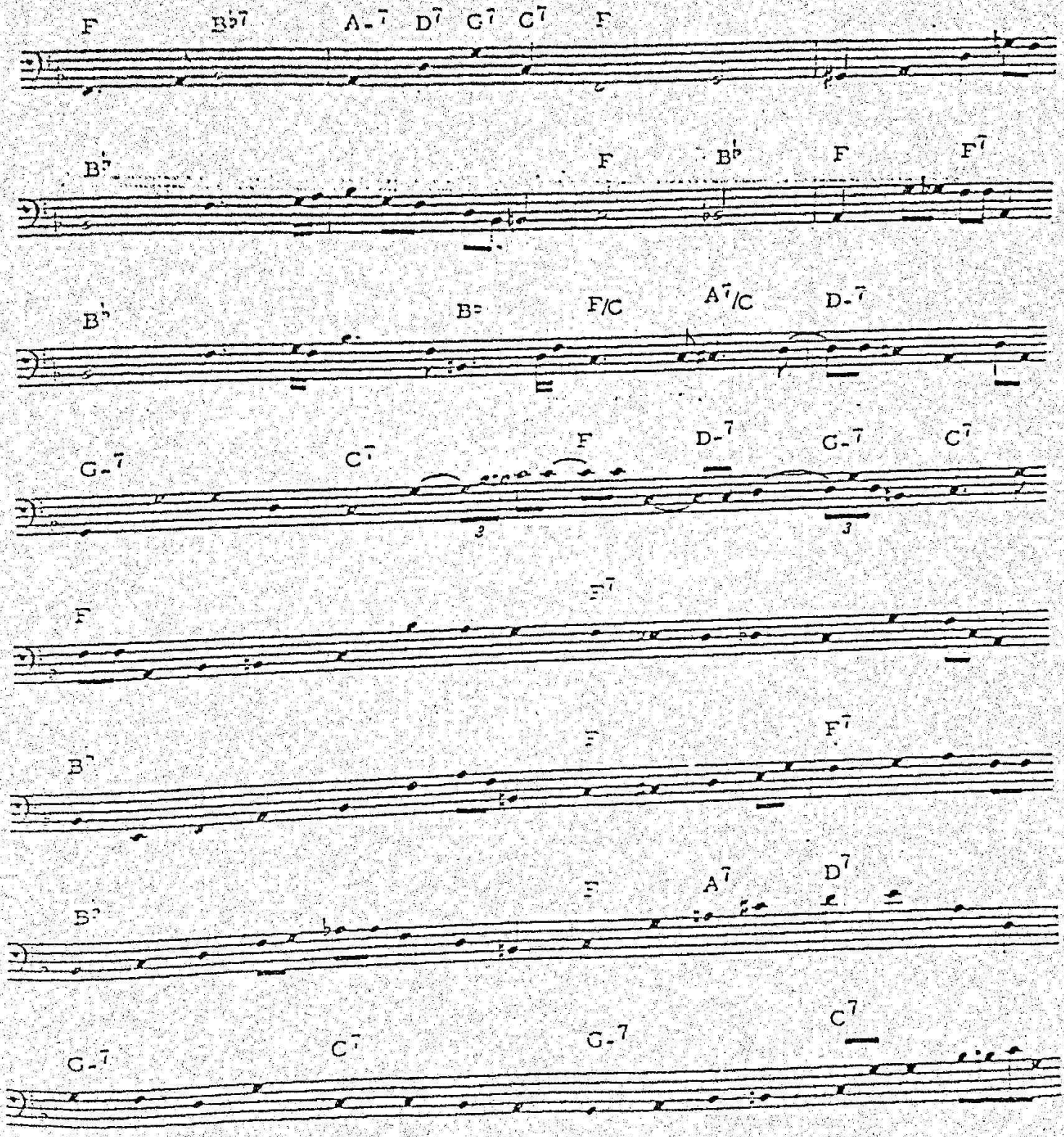


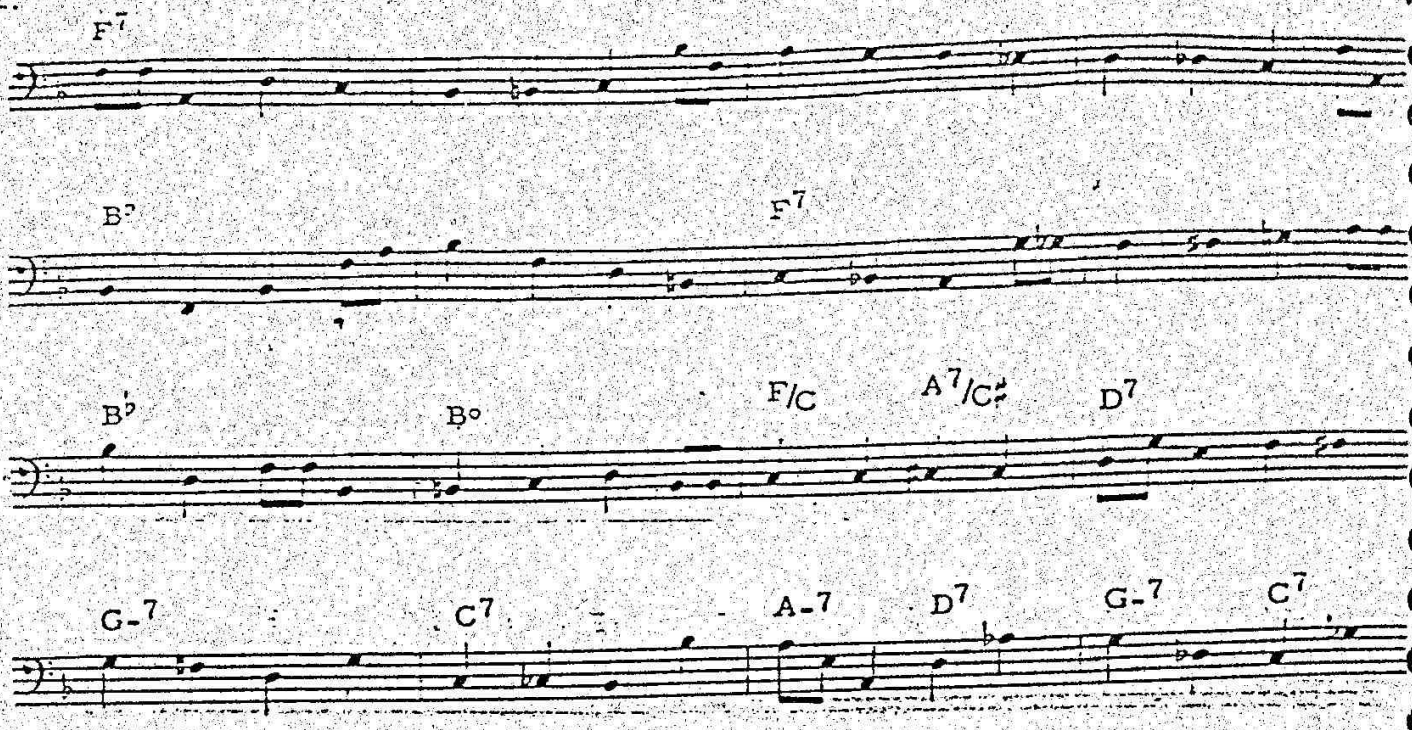

70.
B♭ G-7 C-7 F7 D-7 G7 C-7 F7
B♭ B♭7 E♭ E♭ C-7 F7
B♭ G-7 C-7 F7 B♭ G-7 C-7 F7
B♭ B♭7 E♭ A♭7 B♭ B♭7
E♭ C-7 F-7 B♭7 E♭ C7 F-7 B♭7
E♭ E♭7 A♭ D♭7 G-7 F-7 B♭7 E♭ F7
B♭ G-7 C-7 F7 B♭ G-7 C-7 F7
B♭ B♭7 E♭ E♭ C-7 F7 B♭ C-7 F7
B♭ G-7 C-7 F7 B♭ C-7 F7
B♭ B♭7 E♭ E♭ D-7 D♭7 C-7 F7 B♭ F7

in the style of

RAY BROWN

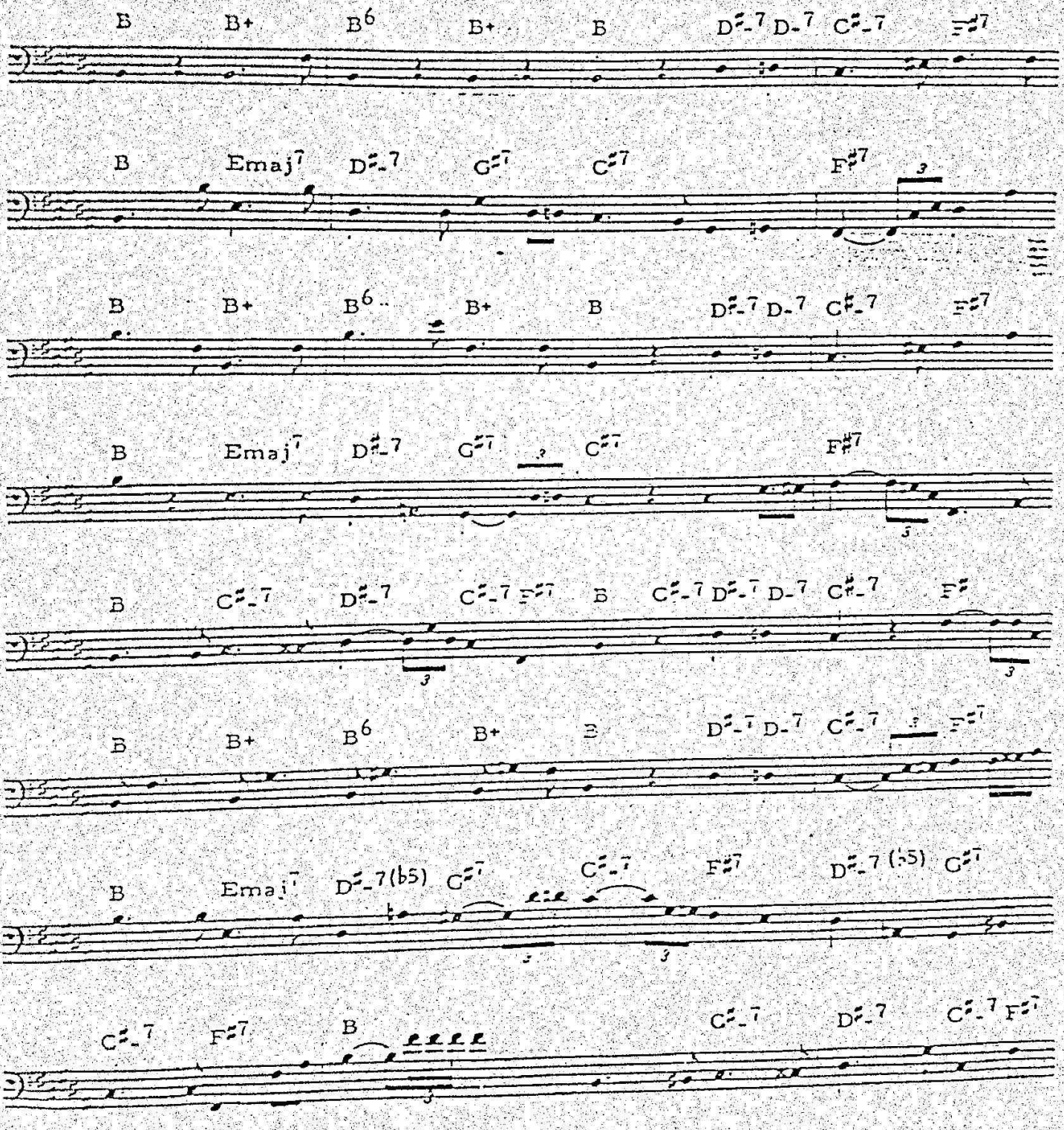
"STANDARD TUNE CHANGES"

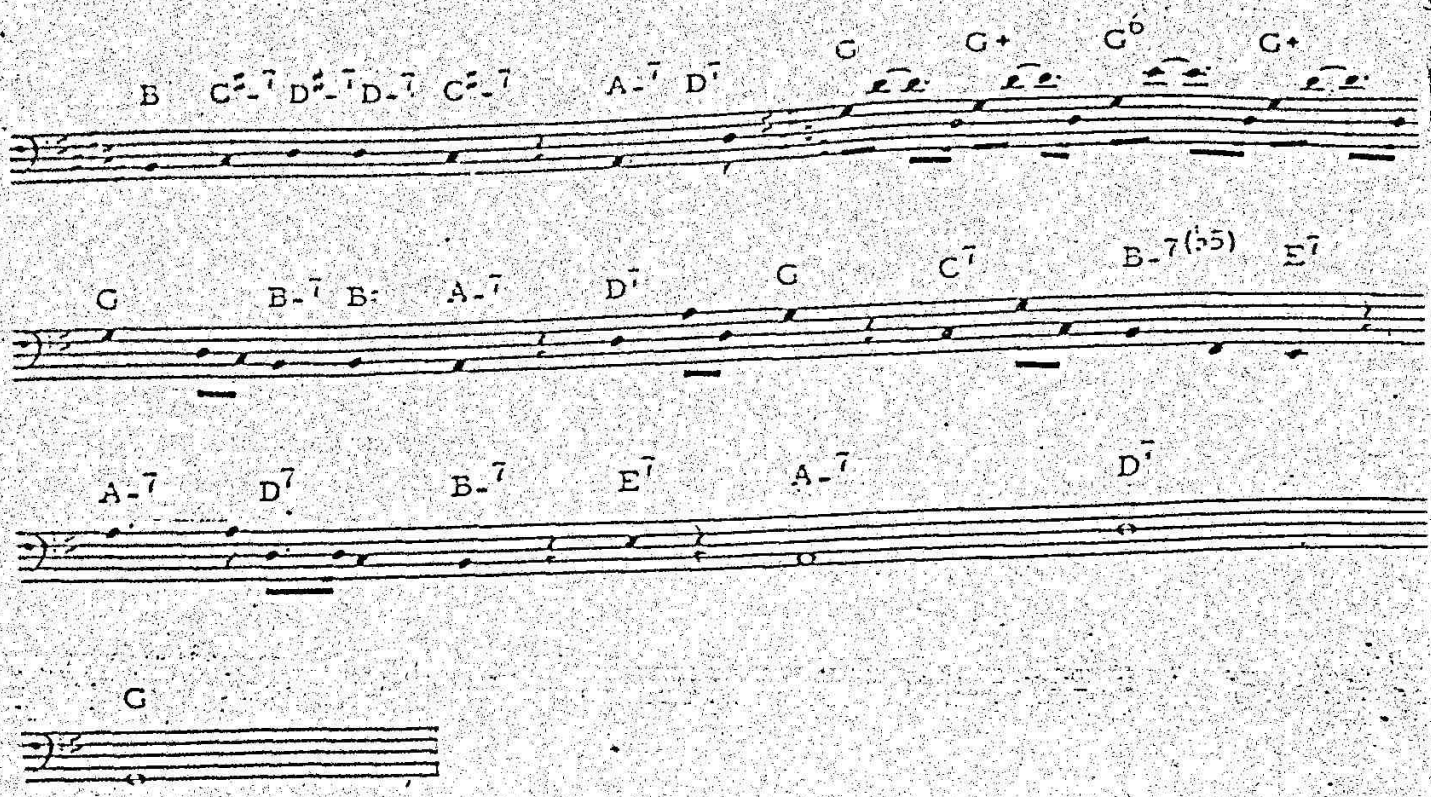



F7
B♭7
F7
B♭
B°
F/C
A7/C♯
D7
G-7
C7
A-7
D7
G-7
C7

in the style of
RAY BROWN

"STANDARD TUNE CHANGES"




B C#-7 D#-7 D-7 C#-7 A-7 D7 G G+ G6 G+
G B-7 B♭7 A-7 D7 G C7 B-7(♭5) E7
A-7 D7 B-7 E7 A-7 D7
G